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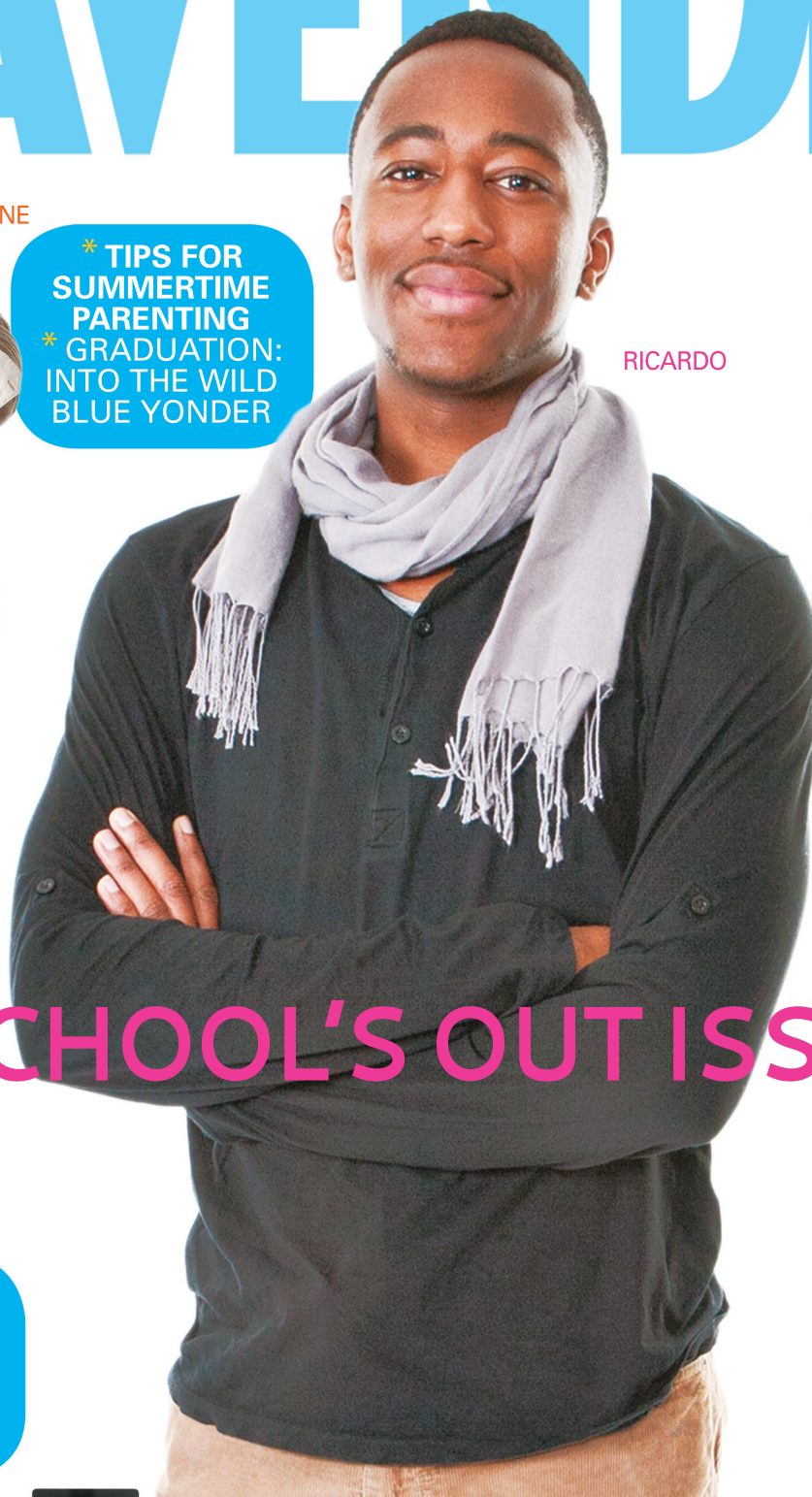
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Issue 468

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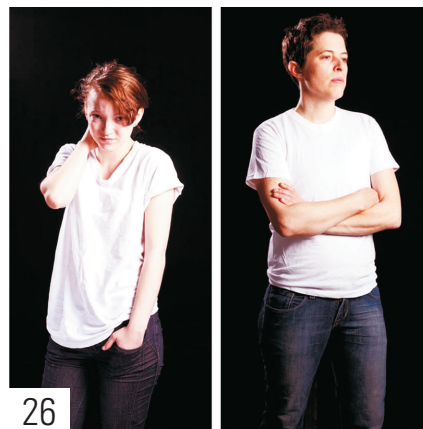
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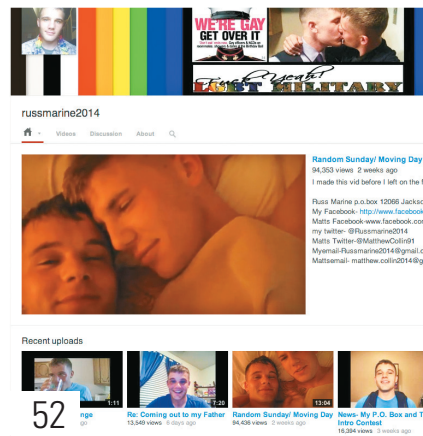


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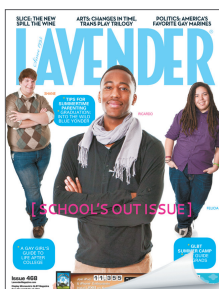


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ON THE COVER

Shane Lueck, Ricardo Millhouse, and Felicia Pruitt Brown are Lavender's Class of 2013. Read about them starting on page 38. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

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LAVENDER®

Volume 18, Issue 468 • May 2-15, 2013

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HAVE THE votes happened at the Capitol? Do we have marriage equality? This issue went to press without any movement happening at the Capitol, yet. In the week between hitting “send” and it hitting the stands, we may have found out if all Minnesotans will get the Freedom to Marry in 2013.

I feel just as I did before Election Day in 2012: Anxious and optimistic, but protective. I am optimistic that the legislators will do the right thing and be on the right side of history by voting for marriage equality. I am protective of this community, whether or not it passes (or has passed).

This topic has not left my mind and heart since November 6, 2012, when victory in defeating the amendment turned into “What’s next?”

Are we celebrating today, are we waiting with hope in our hearts, or are we pointing fingers? You know the saying, “Victory has a thousand fathers, defeat is but an orphan.” The victory in November of 2012 was shared by many and there were clear sides: you vote no or you vote yes (and have a direct impact on the outcome). This campaign for marriage equality (that does not rely on our votes on a ballot) is less easy to categorize or conceptualize. As a community, we have grappled with it. We have looked for as easy of an answer as the two options we were given in November, but it’s not that simple. It’s not that easy. There is more to it than all-or-nothing and looking at what that might constitute does not make someone against equality, it makes someone against nothing. It’s up to our legislators to decide the future of this community’s rights; they are the sole people who have the power and they will be held accountable.

And that’s how we do this. We explore the ideas and we challenge the people in power to do their jobs.

We’ve published all of the Letters to the Editor we’ve received to date—there have been very few. There have been some Facebook posts on Lavender’s page but, again, very few. These facts indicate that the community is also considering various scenarios, I’d say, while still largely wanting marriage equality. A while back, there was a comment on a Facebook post that was critical of Lavender talking about civil unions. I paraphrase, but it was something about how accepting civil unions because we don’t deserve better is abusive and this community has had enough of that kind of abuse. I disagree with the assessment that saying civil unions are better than nothing is the same as saying civil unions are what the community deserves,

instead of equality. Such an idea that the community doesn’t deserve full equality has never been published in Lavender. But I can understand how even raising the option can also raise hackles.

My own hackles haven’t relaxed since 2012. I have hated being media because I have hated being objective, to be honest. To be objective means that I have had to challenge my own ideas and thoughts and be open to looking at others. At first, when civil unions were mentioned to me, I treated the concept like Voldemort in *Harry Potter*—as if the mere mention of the term had power and that power was evil—and I wanted the term to never be uttered again. I lost that argument. As the weeks progressed, I came to see that civil unions are an option, but I will still argue that they are not an equal substitute for marriage. Civil unions are not marriages of a different name or equal to marriage, because civil unions aren’t granted with uniting in mind; they’re designed to appease a group while making sure that they’re not allowed to become legitimized and “normal.” That is abusive, especially for people who haven’t come out yet or for young people who are trying to figure out who they are without hating themselves.

I worry about what constitutes more abuse for this community. Silencing each other is abusive. Shaming each other is abusive. Being told by legislators that they’re not going to vote this year about whether this community gets marriage equality is abusive...that this community’s lives can just be on hold for another year and in limbo. Being told that a party has this community’s best interests in mind but that they won’t make equality happen is abusive.

I hope that this article is irrelevant because marriage equality has already happened by the time you read it. Regardless, I want to thank the legislators who unquestioningly supported this community and those who took risks to do so. I hope you have had the opportunity to go on the record with your support so that your credibility with the community is beyond reproach. I want to thank you for your action as well as your words. I want to vote you back into office.

If we haven’t reached that point yet in the legislative session, I hope that the people in power see how important it is to remain credible with this community. Words are one thing, actions are another... and actions will give this community what it deserves: equality.

With you,
Andy □



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More Lessons from Facebook

AS ANY Facebook follower knows, one receives daily innumerable photos of cats, dogs, infant bats, baby pygmy hippopotami, Friesian and Gypsy Vanner horses—all creatures great and small.

I've always been fascinated by creatures the more outré and arcane the better—in sixth grade, my nickname was “Bugs,” perhaps because of the tent caterpillars I kept in my desk—and there are indeed some amazing beings that share Earth with us. I say that, rather than, “with whom we share the Earth. For not all of these photos are cute, or heartwarming, offering a stark reminder that Man frequently assumes everything living, including some of his fellows, are his to treat as he wishes.

I've read posts that say, “Why show this?” “What have I learned from this awful photo?” I don't like photos of tormented creatures either, nor do I linger over them—but I have looked—and I have learned. I've come to realize that untold numbers of animals are tortured routinely by humans for sport, to extract bone, horn or other essence to increase human virility, and that these atrocities are widespread, ongoing, and accepted.

And why should we care if cats and dogs are skinned and cooked alive in China in the belief that their terror and agony will impart virility to the consumer? Why care that in Spain, galgos hunting hounds are abandoned or tortured to death after the season's end; that live bulls are set on fire and beaten in the Toro Jubilo; that in our own country dog fighting and killing bait dogs in their training is big business?

First and foremost, because animals are living, sentient creatures. That in itself should be reason enough, but another and very important reason is that the way one treats animals is an indication of how we regard our fellow human beings. Twice in the past weeks cases have been reported of teenage girls raped at parties, the perpetrators taking photos and posting them online while others stood by and watched, like spectators at a dog fight or bull ring.

Scoffers may scoff about bleeding hearts, but hearts need to bleed. In the words of Immanuel Kant, “He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.” □

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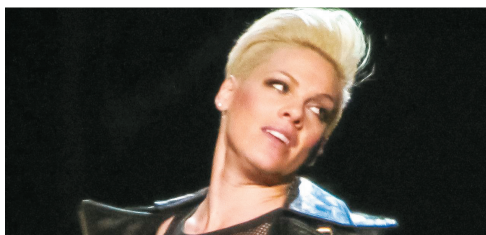
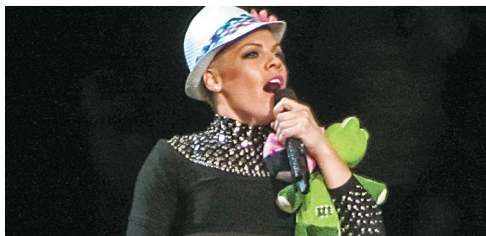
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SPILL THE WINE





(Opposite page) Bar area
(This page from top) Dining area; Gnocchi king crab; Bar area. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

It was never Katie Greeman's dream to open a wine bar. It was just that everything fell so perfectly into place. Now, with the move from the original location into a space that used to be a cycle shop, this incarnation of Spill the Wine somehow feels just like it was meant to be here and exist in this time.

It began when she worked at Bar Abilene. An ambitious friend was a 22-year-old house flipper who needed some plumbing supplies. As she headed into a shop on Washington Avenue, she noticed a restaurant space for sale. "You should get it!" she goaded Greeman.

Katie went down to look at the space: rough, dusty, in an under-developed part of town and yet something just felt right. When she got into the car with Karl Greeman the man who would become her business partner (and husband) the song "Spill the Wine" by War came on the radio. "He was older than me and I'd never heard the song before," she explained. "He said, 'You're opening a wine bar! It should be called Spill the Wine.'"

The two were mobilized. Greeman, who knew little about wine, reached out to every expert she knew. She studied and traveled all over the world using her very last penny to educate herself. What she lacked in wine knowledge, she made up for in busi-

ness acumen. She finagled loans, tripled them and then paid them back ahead of schedule. She worked and pushed, got married, built a business, built a life, became a mother and then tragedy struck. Karl passed away in his sleep from what would later turn out to be a cardiac event at the young age of 42.

Unfortunately, life doesn't stop moving just because your world is falling apart. Chef Craig Johnson had only worked at the restaurant for a short time. A natural do-it-all-yourself-er, Johnson stepped up and made certain that Greeman's customers were seamlessly cared for. The two had known each other for years, and his addition to the restaurant staff was another fortuitous fit. As time marched on, Greeman would at first manage to stumble into the restaurant to make the bank deposits and payroll. Slowly, she found her footing again.

All the while the business remained successful. Part of that success was their loft space, which could be rented out for private events. It did well enough for the building owner to notice. He decided to stop renting the space to Spill the Wine and instead rent the space out for events for his own profit. The problem was that the space had no private entrance. Guests would arrive and make the assumption that their event was at Spill the Wine.





(From left) Hoisin pork belly; Owner Katie Greeman; Brussels sprouts



his formal culinary training in Oregon. He returned home to stage under JP Samuelson at D'Amico Cucina. He also worked at Café Lurcat with Isaac Becker. All of his culinary experiences are found on the menu. There is Mediterranean and Spanish influence. The smoky, charred octopus is tender and delicious. The lamb neck with nettle pesto (nettles brought direct from the Pacific Northwest) will only be available for a few more weeks and you owe it to yourself to get in there and sample some. The tres leches cake with passion fruit and little squiggles of lime zest has inspired such a devout following that it has been expressly forbidden by staff and customers ever to tweak.

The flights are good for wine geeks as well as those who would like to learn more. Greeman changes the selection every few weeks. There's a super Tuscan, giant-flavored Italian red available for just \$12 a glass. They have a wine club, where guests buy-in for \$25 and get one free glass of wine per visit. There is so much wine and a full bar! The cocktails mix classics and old favorites from the former location with new creations – often done by Johnson.

It's only been a couple of weeks and already the restaurant hums with an infectious energy. While it's been a bumpy road, it does appear that everything at Spill the Wine has worked out just the way it was meant to be. As for Greeman and Johnson, two old friends who have lived through death, parenthood (Johnson has a young daughter from a previous relationship), and a major business move, the two are now engaged to be married. Just one last perfect fit. ▣

Spill the Wine
901 West Lake Street,
Minneapolis
(612) 339-3388
www.spillthewinempls.com

Makes sense, as they were walking into the restaurant, under their sign, past the wine bar, and up the stairs. It led to some awkward conversations for the Spill the Wine staff and these event guests. The relationship between with the building owner continued to deteriorate until one day in July, Greeman reached the breaking point. It was time to move.

Serendipity was not done with her just yet. She reached out to a friend who simultaneously reached out to her. He had a new restaurant space in need of a restaurateur.

The interior is filled with reclaimed wood, refurbished tables and delicate touches. The room is wide open, accented by art from a local artist. The bar is supported by giant wine barrels. A dark wood ladder allows staff to access higher stashed bottles. The entry way is marked by a small couch with color-popping accent pillows and an aquamarine water dispenser. When I asked Greeman which design firm she worked with, she answered, "Pinterest. It's entirely ideas I found there. I was constantly printing pages and sharing them with our contractors – I must have driven them crazy." Behold, the modern era. When the weather is warmer, the windows along Bryant will open up and soon there will be a pergola-topped patio out back with sixteen seats.

The food is conducive to hanging out, plenty of small plates to share. Chef Craig Johnson grew up in Orono before traveling for school, working in the restaurant industry and eventually getting



(From top) Lamb neck; Tres leches cake with passion fruit.



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Caritas Vocal Ensemble. Photo by Shelly Campbell

CARITAS VOCAL ENSEMBLE'S 2013 CONCERT SEASON: GIVE GOOD GIFTS

Sun., May 19

**St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church,
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for St. Paul Area Council of Churches – Project Home

Sat., June 1

Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church,

2020 W. Lake Isles Pkwy, Mpls

for Neighborhood Involvement Program

www.caritasvocalensemble.org

The inclusive Caritas Vocal Ensemble is an *a cappella* group that gives 85% of its proceeds to various charitable organizations. The 2013 season, now in full swing, is entitled *Give Good Gifts*. Singer Kristen Frost-Tibben has sung for eight of the ensemble's 12 seasons. She points out that "the group is small, only nine singers, so we're able to connect with the audience in a way that larger groups cannot. But the best part is that our concerts raise money for other nonprofits, mostly small organizations based in the Twin Cities. Since our group started we've raised over \$120,000."

Singer Liz Stanley shares, "I enjoy the variety of music that Caritas performs, from standard choral repertoire to less familiar works. I especially like the jazz in our repertoire this year, which is challenging to sing, and it's really fun to see how much the audience enjoys it. I've always preferred singing in smaller groups, which really puts

a lot of responsibility on each singer and makes the repertoire that much more interesting to perform since we're often singing one on a part. It's a great mix of people who work well together both musically and personally."

This season's selections range from Renaissance to jazz and includes composers such as Thomas Tomkins, Maurice Durufle, Charles Villiers Stanford, and Stephen Chatman. Mark Hiemenz adds, "I love singing with Caritas because we make beautiful music for great causes, and because it is a super, simpatico group."

COLUMBINUS

Through May 13

First Baptist Church Basement,

499 Wacouta St., St. Paul

(612) 481-2234

www.blankslatetheatre.com

Columbinus is Blank Slate Theatre's response to the school shootings that have become all too commonplace in recent years. Until Sandy Hook there was an odd silence every time such shootings transpired, rather than public outcry and the reasonable moves toward gun regulation that are finally being discussed.

Moreover, shootings, mass and otherwise, are being revealed to be a major killer of Americans of all ages. And the Boston Marathon bombings, like many of the shootings, have to do with disaffected young males who, for reasons we've not yet settled as a culture, continue a pattern of violence. That's why ongoing serious discussion is needed.

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Nice Fish. Photo by Richard Termine

this most touchy of subjects at some point in the near future. The play, by Stephen Karam and P.J. Paparelli, suits their style as it involves discussions with parents, survivors, and community leaders. It's a style that brings to mind the Tectonic Theater Project which gave us *The Laramie Project*.

Director Adam Arnold observes "events like the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School are still happening today. Following the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary this past December, we at Blank Slate Theatre quickly moved to do a play about school shootings. We felt we had to do something." While exploring the subject of violence in schools it meditates on the meaning of, as Arnold puts it, "what it means to be an adolescent."

FIVE LESBIANS EATING QUICHE

Through May 12
Intermedia Arts, 2822 Lyndale Av. S., Mpls.
(612) 871-4444
www.theatrenow.org

The new Actors Equity theater group, Theatre Now, is presenting the area premier of the New York Fringe Festival hit by Andrew Hobgood and Evan Linder. The officers of the Susan B. Anthony society for the Sisters of Gertrude Stein prepare for their annual vegetarian quiche breakfast. The actresses playing this group's madcap officers are Beth Desotelle, Andrea Wollenberg, Anna Hickey, and Erin Mae Johnson. They sport the classically codified '50s 'ladylike' look, coiffed and accessorized with pearls and gloves, but they share some deep dark secrets that we don't typically think of when we think of women of that time.

When these society ladies end up in a civil defense bunker erected by Building and Grounds Chairman Veronica 'Vern' Schultz (Dawn Brodey) for an atomic Test Drill, submerged thoughts surface. Director Shelli Place calls the women a "plucky quintet that brings to life characters from the conservative Cold War world of 1956 – where 'duck and cover' was a household phrase and 'form and demeanor' meant everything – although

fearful, they remain steadfast in their congeniality!"

NICE FISH

Through May 18
Guthrie Theater, 818 Second St., Mpls.
(612) 377-2224
www.guthrietheater.org

If one were to imagine a folkloric tale centuries ahead about our own present day, *Nice Fish* might well qualify. Co-playwrights Louis Jenkins and Mark Rylance have spun numerous poetic passages -many of which can stand on their own at a poetry/prose slam- centered on two buddies on a frozen lake at the close of Minnesota's ice fishing season. Todd Rosenthal's set is a simple floor that resembles the lake and a vast expanse of sky that sometimes seems to overpower the action. But perhaps that's the idea.

Rylance and Jim Lichtscheidl play Ron, who says everything that comes into his mind and Erik, who is reserved and contained. When bikini beauty, Flo (Emily Swallow) and her territorially macho boyfriend, Wayne (Chris Carlson) show up in a zany ice house and on a snowmobile, an element of the sensual and the primitive seep into the picture. Tyson Forbes as a con-

temporary but rustic fiddler named Wainwright and Bob Davis as a demeaning DNR (Dept. of Natural Resources) officer round out this oddly original comedy co-directed to magical effect by Rylance and Claire van Kampen. Though the show could lose 20 minutes, it remains wondrously entertaining with a breathtaking ending. Van Kampen's music is nicely evocative.

YES! NIC LINCOLN DANCES SOLO

May 16-19
TEK Box, 528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
(612) 206-3600
www.niclincoln.com/yes

Nic Lincoln is one of those great dancers of the James Sewell Ballet. So you know he's topnotch just to be part of that glorious group. But you have a chance to see him dance solo as choreographed by some of the best female choreographers around at the TEK Box space at the Cowles/Hennepin Center for the Arts. He says he will definitely be expressing both his gayness and his love for women. Lincoln explains "as a gay youth I had a rough and challenging childhood, and now I want to provide the current GLBT youth with an artistic role model. I drew inspiration from this show from the number of ankle/foot surgeries that I had between November 2009 and May 2012. During my recoveries I linked female support in my life with my history as a gay man. I then began to commission work by amazingly talented female choreographers. As an artist and activist this project is a direct connection between dance and Outfront MN's vigorous action and support for GLBT youth. Outfront MN will have a presence at every show and I have also invited a youth who has benefited through Outfront MN's guidance to speak about their life experience during my show. This project is important to me, not only because it is an artistic challenge, but because it will connect dance with public awareness of GLBT culture."

Yes! will open with music by celebrated trans artist Venus de Mars of punk, goth, glam, and All The Pretty Horses fame. The choreographers are Penelope Freeh, Wynn Fricke, Judith Howard, Megan Mayer, and Kristen van Loon. The TEK Box is the Cowles and Hennepin Center's smaller studio theater which gives voice to intimate, edgy dance work. ■

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Changes in Time (L to R): Briana Zora Libby, Heather Spear, and Chris Little. Photo by Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography

E.B. BOATNER'S SWEEPING TRANS PLAY TRILOGY REVEALS HOW OUR TIME SHAPES WHO WE ARE

E.B. Boatner is the pen name for someone *Lavender* readers are long familiar with: Ethan Boatner, *Editor Emeritus*, whose *A Word In Edgewise* column still appears in every issue. However, in 2003, E.B.'s one act play, *Wishes*, was selected for Stages, the National Transgender Theater Festival and was staged in New York City later that year. After that he wrote two one acts that chronologically follow as part of his MSL (Masters of Liberal Studies) degree from the U of M. The trilogy is titled *Changes in Time*, now in its world premiere directed by Claire Aivatable for 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities at the Minneapolis Theatre Garage.

At 72, Boatner is someone who has lived a truly epic life. It took decades for the 1963 Harvard graduate to fully realize just what was going on within himself before he finally transitioned FTM. He was 11 when Christine Jorgensen's 1952 MTF sex change astounded the world. Queerness of any kind - the words for which included transvestism, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality - was either spoken about in whispers and/or pathologized. The term 'hermaphrodite' was used for what we now call 'intersex'. In the mid-twentieth century

and even into the 1990s, the term 'queer' itself was a prime insult and expletive.

Boatner's parents were born less than a decade after the Oscar Wilde trials and were teenagers when women finally got the vote. They were born into a time when gender and sexual 'otherness' were codified as deviant. Such misfits, regardless of what sort of queer individual they were, were sometimes said to be The Third Sex. In some intellectual circles that term may or may not have been an insult. But beyond such circles it clearly was. Anything aside from the heterosexual norm was universally regarded as 'unnatural'. The idea of

sexual orientation as a viable identity was not yet formed. Therefore, the notion of transgender or transsexual as an option, much less an identity, was even further in the future.

I spoke with Boatner recently about how his trilogy reflects his own life, the eras he has lived through, and how we are each inevitably the products of our own time.

JT: You've been exploring ideas about how the time, culture, and vocabulary we are each born into forms our consciousness and seals us into ways of seeing and being. How does that figure into your own experience and *Changes in Time*?

EB: I believe that everyone is a

product of his or her context, and can only act within those parameters. The time in which one lives, the perspective of the community in which one is raised, and the constraints of the prevailing knowledge -technological, sociological, psychological, scientific- determine much of your life. Penicillin, for example, was not available during World War I, and began to be used medically only a year after I was born (1941). In our society, homosexuality was deemed a mental illness in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) until 1973 when it was removed. Where one lands on the time and culture board is something of a crap shoot.

One of the main points of *Changes in Time* is that the characters have the knowledge and limitations of their time and can only speak in the grammar and syntax of the contemporary culture. This is as true of the protagonist born in 1941 as it is for the parents born in 1903.

The word 'transgender' was not available during the time frame of the first two plays, *Wishes* and *Dresses* (set in the 1950s-1970s). Rain (Briana Zora Libby) /Lorraine (Heather Spear) can only know something is wrong, not *what*. In *Wishes*, the character Court (Chava Curland) understands being a lesbian; not just because she is one, but that while lesbianism was not accepted, it was at least known to her and to contemporary society.

In *Dresses*, even in her 30s in the 1970s, Lorraine still only knows that she is not who she should be, not how to effect that change. She's angry and can't really articulate why. Her mother, like Court in the first play, can only think Lorraine must be a lesbian. Not until much later, in *Changes*, has the culture, technology, psychological and sociological understanding progressed to the degree that Laurence, née Lorraine, can comprehend 'transgender' and move forward to claim his self-hood. Yes, culture, like living creatures, changes and evolves: it's happening today with the great sea changes in the growing acceptance of homosexuality as one of many wavelengths in the great spectrum of human sexuality.

JT: To what degree is *Changes in Time* auto-

biographical?

EB: The plays are autobiographical to the degree that any work of fiction is autobiographical. Whether a beginner, a Jane Austen, William Shakespeare, or Edward Albee, the writer sees life only through the lenses of personal understanding shaped by his or her culture.

Much in *Changes in Time* is true – conversations, physical details and so on- but none of the events 'happened'. The confrontation in *Wishes* did not occur, although the camp did have candlelight wishing ceremony. My own parents died in 1983 and 1987. The word 'transgender' was never uttered in our home, since it was not yet in common parlance. They never met Ethan, so neither *Dresses* nor *Changes* could have transpired as they did in these dramatic, fictional renderings.

JT: I'm intrigued that you imagine how your parents might have reacted to your gender change.

EB: I planned each play to have two characters – primarily to be simpler to write and stage since they were my first plays. *Wishes* involves 14-year-old Rain with another teen and was designed to show how in a given time and culture, two close friends can believe they understand each other, yet be far wide of the mark.

Dresses and *Changes* have Lorraine and the Laurence (Chris Little) with the mother and father respectively. Obviously, then, the former addresses my thoughts on how a -and not necessarily my- mother (Muriel Bonertz) might react to her child's revelations, while the latter suggests how a father (Dann Peterson) -not necessarily mine- would react to both gaining a son and mourning the loss of his daughter.

I'm not exactly hedging. I, in fact, have no idea how my parents would have reacted. They were so embroiled in their own affairs, they might simply have looked up briefly and said, "That's nice, Dear."

JT: Tell me how the film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) became a kind of springboard for how you've come to see things.

EB: By the time I saw *Boys Don't Cry*, I pretty much knew my own feelings. I had even gone

out to dinner in a small, deep south town with a friend who was transitioning another way, me in a jacket and tie, he/she in a skirt and blouse. However, as I watched the film, I was wondering why the main character, Brandon Teena (Hilary Swank) was behaving -to my mind- so angrily and self-destructively. Then, in an epiphany, I realized that I had acted out in exactly the same way for years and understood that like Teena's, my own angry behavior stemmed from not being able to be myself, and not knowing who exactly that was.

Once I discovered that in this day and in this time I *could* be myself, I set about making it happen – in an amazingly short time attaining a state of what I called 'gender euphoria'. As me, I'm quite content – even productive, having completed my MLS (Master of Liberal Studies) degree at the U of M last May, published my psychological thriller, *M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder*, last October, and now about to experience the first production of *Changes in Time*. The day after it closes I fly to Boston to see old friends at my Harvard 50th Reunion.

JT: You've said that being older may have actually kept you from being discriminated against.

EB: I meant that being older may have forestalled discrimination simply because no one is particularly cognizant of old fogeys: 72 is not the new anything. I can see that it would be very different for someone much younger in bar or dating scenes, or if an individual was of a markedly different body type than expected of their presenting gender – a very small, slender guy or a tall, husky gal, for example. The more notice is drawn, the greater the chance for discrimination. It's real, it's out there, it can be lethal. It needs to be addressed. ■

Changes in Time

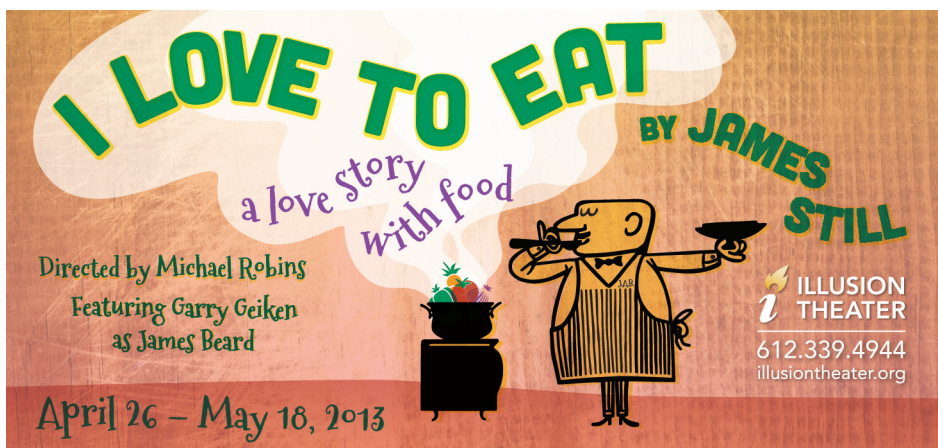
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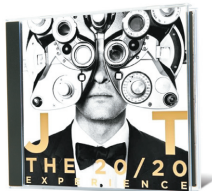
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**LOW THE INVISIBLE WAY**

Here are the raw numbers for the Duluth band: 20 years, 10 albums and an unwavering dedication to the power of mood. While Wilco mastermind Jeff Tweedy is behind the desk for this one, he doesn't alter the essential Low-ness of the album. Leaders (and lovers) Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker have made spare arrangements and a quiet tone – even when the guitars are squalling with feedback – a virtue. Parker takes more turns at lead vocals here, and there is more piano than in the past. What hasn't changed is the tension that the pair craft, regardless if it's on vocals or in the interplay between guitar/piano and percussion. It's hard to imagine a more personal and intense release coming out this year – or one nearly as satisfying.

**JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE THE 20/20 EXPERIENCE**

I wouldn't go as far as to call this a comeback – that should be reserved for pop stars who go away because of drug addiction, cult membership, or crippling agoraphobia after getting ill-advised tattoos – but it is certainly a welcome return to the pop world. Timberlake focuses on slow jams on these 10 lengthy (sometimes too lengthy) cuts, bringing out all of his '70s sultriness to bear. It's clear that the savvy singer is in on the joke: how else could he avoid laughing through a song where he describes cruising around the universe in a spaceship built for two, with the "top down?" A bit more pace would help the album, as would a bit of work under the editing knife to help sharpen the flabbier tunes.

**DEPECHE MODE DELTA MACHINE**

Who saw this coming? Depeche Mode have been at it this for decades, and never really went away following their massive early 1990s success. Still, they haven't sounded this confident and accomplished since those heady, drug-fueled days. Led by David Gahan's signature voice and Martin Gore's tight songwriting, the band charts a dark course through Delta Machine. The title evokes the music – bluesy, Southern-influenced tunes merged with harder electronic sounds. Most veteran bands can come up with a few good tunes to front-load the album, but Depeche Mode stay consistent to the end, saving one of the best tunes for last: the simmering "Goodbye," which showcases the pulsating music, pleading vocals and moody lyrics that have long made the band a favorite.

**KAOZ ENTERSEXTIONS VOLS. 1 AND 2**

The hip-hop artist – Kevin Lanier Moore to friends and family – unleashes a heavy-duty one-two punch with these short albums. The songs are raw, loaded with talk about sex, love and making your way in the world as a gay man looking for a lot of the above. Kaoz has the high level of world play needed to make a hip-hop song really swing, while his honesty – from being a first-timer in sex ("Like a Virgin") to a sordid tale of trying to get it on in the big city ("Rhode Island Redd") to singing lovingly about smoking weed ("Mary Jane") carries the lyrical day. Musically, there are enough clever twists – the twisting, foggy backdrop on "Mary Jane" – to keep the listener attuned.



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Salzburg, Austria. Photo courtesy of Istockphoto

SALZBURG, AUSTRIA

The hills are alive, all right—a mighty fortress rising here, a somber monastery anchoring another peak, and, yes, everywhere, the sound of music. It's Salzburg, and I'm infatuated with—no, not Maria. Mozart!—the city's favorite, and most famous, son.

It's Easter Week, where Mozart Mania hits a high note. Sunday morning, his "Missa Solemnis" rings out from a patriarchal church. (And, during Holy Week, Haydn's "Last Words of Christ" fills another, with Bruckner's own Mass under another steeple. And more. And all are free.) Plus, at the famed Marionette Theater, which performs in an intimate Baroque chamber as glorious as the music, I'm watching clever puppets enact Mozart's "Magic Flute."

Here's the Cathedral, fancifully refurbished in 1628, where Mozart was baptized and later

played the organ, dominating one of the spacious plazas that link the compact Old Town. Here, too, his birth house, where you'll find the infant's violin—along with a lock of hair, pearl buttons, tobacco case, and his portrait on every souvenir known to marketing genius, from chocolates to golf balls, playing cards and pack of Kleenex (plus CDs, of course). And across the river, in the New Town—where the pretty Mirabell Hotel in which I'm staying began life as a palace in 1653—there's his later residence with his piano along with scads of portraits and explanations to separate the true version of that six-year-old in powdered wigs from the many fakes. There's ornate Café Tomaselli of 1708, with fancy coffees served by waiters in formal dress, where Mozart enjoyed *eine kleine braune* long before me.

But long before Mozart came the Romans.

You can spot remains under the Panorama Museum, which flaunts a 360-degree painted view of the town, circa 1828, unchanged today. (Yes, that's Maria's convent in the distance.) The picturesque-beyond-belief cobbled shopping street, Getreidegasse, once the Roman road, today is densely packed with 15th-century facades flaunting iron signs depicting the trade practiced within—a venerable apothecary, a goldsmith, a—what?—a McDonald's. Called the Rome of the North, Salzburg was named for its claim to fame and riches, *salz*: salt, aka "white gold." The man who used his salt-mine fortunes to transform it from a muddled medieval backwater to its inviting presence was Archbishop Wolf Dieter. In the 1600s, he bought, then tore down, blocks of houses to create the open, social plazas that link the town today. (He also built the ornate Mirabell

Palace—now a concert site—and its vast public gardens for his mistress and many kids.)

I'm staring at his portrait—keen eyes, cultivated moustache—in the Salzburg Museum, which depicts the city's history, topped by an exhibit called *Ars Sacra*: glorious religious art (the only kind, back in the day) with medieval, dark-eyed Christs balancing golden dinner-plate halos, Virgins in fancy dress, and altarpieces from many a surrounding church. Excellent handiwork of today's craftsmen—dirndls to edibles, ceramics to carvings—is found at Heimatwerk, housed below. Here, close to the glockenspiel which frequently chimes its 17th-century bells, stands Mozart's statue, strewn with flowers from present-day fans.

In the square behind the Cathedral, with giant chessboard and golden orb topped by a life-size sculpted man gazing into those "alive" hills, a narrow lane—past the antique water wheel and the best bakery in town—leads to St. Peter's Cemetery, a pocket of well-tended gardens and ornate memorials. Then step in to St. Peter itself, whose Romanesque interior has been gilded with Rococo luster. You're now close to the Festival Hall, Salzburg's famous summer music scene.

And close, indeed, to good eats. The Music Festival's glitterati head to Triangle, where owner Franzi will seat you amidst his clutch of cozy wooden tables to feast on regional fare, including his signature fish soup, lush with salmon and fennel in tomato broth, then wiener schnitzel with warm, sweet-sour potato salad (or choose goulash with bread dumpling, or local trout). And for dessert, puffy pancakes loaded with blueberries, sided with ice cream.

Aside St. Peter's Church, seek out Stiftskeller St. Peter, the oldest restaurant in town—and, they say, in all of Europe. Charlemagne ate here in 803, but today, its bright, intimate rooms serve dishes the mighty monarch might not recognize: yummy, nouvelle-inspired fare like seabass carpaccio with salted artichoke and chervil ice cream, followed by pork tenderloin plated with gnocchi in a caraway-bacon glaze, then profiteroles garnished with orange-mint salad and mandarin ice cream. A glass of Gruner Veltliner, Austria's poster wine, gilds the lily.

At K+K, as contemporary within as it is antique without, you'll spot the town's movers and shakers (yes, the mayor) lunching on lamb in all its guises. My luscious chops with bacon rosti followed a starter of sheep's cheese on lamb's lettuce in pumpkinseed oil, the local specialty. Then jump back a few hundred years, across the river, to Zum fidelen Affen—the Merry Monkey—housed in a building from 1417, serving vast portions of food almost as venerable: tafelspits (boiled beef) with roast potatoes and spinach. Goulash. Schnitzel. I started with a light pumpkin-orange soup and finished with schateinharfen, a dessert that takes longer to pronounce than devour: apples and almonds baked with bits of pancake.

Easter Week salutes the lusty outdoor market, held on Green Thursday across from Mirabell Palace, and worth an early wake-up call to meander amidst the hundreds of bustling stalls selling Easter lamb, Easter breads, and every-



(Clockwise from top left) Outdoor sculpture behind cathedral. Photo courtesy of Stock.Xchng; Salzburger Seenland, bikers; Salzburger Seenland, Obenndorf. Photos courtesy of salzburger-seenland.at.

thing else edible, from sausage to cheese, from fruit to schnapps, along with flowers galore—even butter, sculpted into lambs, and eggs: dyed in myriad colors or painted in intricate designs. Chocolate? Of course! Also crafts, like tiny bunnies made of twigs and chicks in nests. "Gruss Gott," everyone greets me, followed by "Auf Wiedersehen"—it's that friendly.

Easter Markets fill the countryside, too. Tiny Hennsdorf boasts food trucks vending cheese, sausage, flowers, spices, fresh baked goods and more. There's also an Easter Market of crafts at Gut Aiderbichel, a countryside estate founded as a "retirement home" for old, sick or abused animals, open to tour, and pet. Donkeys wander beside us, and senior cows waddle by. The horses are majestic, while the monkeys, formerly used for experiments, won praise from Jane Goodell. Farther on, amidst shining mountain lakes, tour Trumer Brewery at Obertrum, then enjoy its lager while lunching on local trout under the staring gaze of stags' heads in old-time Brauagasthof Sigl, dripping with gemütlichkeit.

It's supposed to be spring. But it keeps snowing. Back in Salzburg, sculpted horses rising from the fountain wear icicle beards. Yet the welcome couldn't be warmer. To plan your trip, visit www.saltzburg.info. □

SIDE BAR GAY SALZBURG

In Mirabell Park: Steps near the Pegasus statue lead to a small mound, the rendezvous point for the town's gay community. This very open and integrated city welcomes GLBT visitors everywhere.

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Sash Brothers

Joint Interview: Ryan Brown, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2013 and Kyle Truss, Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2013

This column is a double interview with the two local titleholders (also known as sash brothers) who will be representing Minnesota at the International Mr. Leather (IML) contest in Chicago, Memorial Day weekend. Ryan Brown is Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2013, and Kyle Truss is Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2013.

Who is helping each of you prepare for IML?

KT: My club brothers, the Atons, are really stepping forward. Anything I need—I just have to ask. The Knights of Leather are helping out with morale support. They're a pansexual group, so they're not tied to IML as closely as the Atons are, but they're still behind me one hundred percent. The local community has really stepped up and said whatever you need, just ask and we'll help. It's been very, very exciting.

RB: I have to agree with exactly what Kyle said. The local community has been awesome. Everyone is willing to help out and be a part of my journey as long as I'm willing to ask.

What do each of you want to accomplish with your title?

KT: The Twin Cities Leather title is owned by Twin Cities Leather, the local fetish shop. Their motto is "Community First," and that's kind of what I've always embraced with what I do. That's why I work with Leather Pride—to be a part of the larger community. Part of what I want to do with my title is that there's always seemed to be this divide between the gay leathermen and the pansexual leather groups. I'd like to pull both communities closer, and see more gay men at pansexual events and more pansexuals at queer events.

RB: One thing I've gotten passionate about, based partly on my travels, is seeing other communities and the amount of community-based education they do. I want to see more of that here in the Twin Cities. I had the great opportunity to host a rope event at the Eagle, and I was blown away by

the turnout at the event—especially considering how quickly it came together. There was less than a week of advertising for it, yet we had fifty-five guys at the bar. That said to me that there's a real hunger for more opportunities for knowledge.

How are each of you involved in the local community?

KT: Basically through my work with MN Leather Pride. One of the things Leather Pride is looking at doing is to not focus everything on the week before Twin Cities Pride—to have workshops, demos and classes all throughout the year. I'm also a member of the Atons and an associate member of the Knights, my brothers and sisters.

RB: HIV stigma has been a huge piece of what I've been doing, even before becoming Mr. Minneapolis Eagle. I'm involved with the Mr. Friendly project to reduce HIV stigma, and now I'm also on the Community Action Board of the Minnesota AIDS Project. Today I was at the state capitol meeting with legislators, talking about the importance of funding not only for continuing AIDS prevention efforts, but also for the quality of care for people living with HIV. I've also done the Red Ribbon Ride. And if Spring ever gets here, softball season will be starting—I play with the Minneapolis Unicorns.

What are your thoughts as you look forward to IML?

KT: Mostly panic. I just want to make sure that I'm not trying to be anything other than who I am, and kind of keep myself in check so that I'm not trying to put on a show when I get there—just remember to be authentic. Yes, to care about what other people think, but not to the point where I'm changing who I am deep down.

RB: In the lead-up to IML, there isn't a whole lot different than what I'm already doing. There's a little bit of traveling involved. I'm continuing to learn about the community. I've got some fundraising events coming up for the Aliveness Project next week. And I'll be continuing to chat with people in the



(From left) Kyle Truss, Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2013; right: Ryan Brown, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2013. Photo by Steve Lenius.

community. I agree with what Kyle said—gotta be yourself, there's no one else to be.

What IML send-off events will each of you be having?

Ryan: My send-off party will be Saturday, May 11, 9:00 P.M. at the Eagle-Bolt Bar, which coincides with Gear Night at the Eagle.

Kyle: My send-off party is still being scheduled, so people should check my Facebook page or my blog for details [see below]. □

Find Ryan Brown on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/mme2013; find Kyle Truss on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/MrTCL2013 or read his blog at go-boy-go.blogspot.com.

[SCHOOL'S OUT]



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I don't find it necessary to run into every room and shout "I'M GAY I'M GAY I'M GAY" while waving a rainbow flag.



KATHLEEN

A GAY GIRL'S GUIDE TO LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

By Kathleen Watson

I've made it. It's been a year, and I'm still standing. Still breathing. Still living. I've made it through that awkward, awful, and (yes, I'll say it) awesome year after college when the world is suddenly REAL and responsibilities are REAL and jobs are REAL and life is actually REAL. Last May, I received my ticket to adulthood (or was it a kick in the pants?) when I took off my cap and gown and said goodbye to the stresses of papers, performances, extra-curriculars, and resume-worthy activities. I traded all that in for that optimism only held by the newly graduated, and I started living my life. I was ready to change the world, and my diploma gave me every right to the very best of everything. Or so I thought.

My self-elected year of well-deserved rest from the trials and tribulations of academia has been anything but restful, but I refused to let my optimism be stifled...for the first three months. Slowly, the realization that I am not changing the world—or doing much to be particularly proud of—sunk in and left me in a state of disappointment. Is this what real life is like? Am I going to be living on the cusp of financial ruin forever, burdened by student loans that I'll be paying off until I'm 40? Am I going to work menial jobs for the rest of my life and forego my artistic passion in order to put food on the table and clothes on my back? I don't know what I expected life after college to be, but this was definitely not it.

After wallowing in crippling self-pity for a couple of months, I did what my mother always told me to do. I put on my big girl panties and dealt with it. I realized that things really aren't bad—they're just different. I'm young, I'm resilient, and I'd rather go out swinging than let life steam-roll over my forlorn body. I've made a good life for myself, and I'm actually happier and more confident in my sense of self than I've ever been. And here I am, not sure whether or not I can be considered a "success" story (and not really caring if I am), but more confident than ever that this year has been more necessary and more worthwhile than another year in a classroom would have possibly been.

I'm not going to present the ridiculous façade that I have my life completely figured out, or even that I fully know who I am and where I'm going, but I do believe that the lessons I've learned in the last year are quite possibly universal (and most definitely comical). Thus, without further ado, I present what I've learned while (informally) enrolled in Life 101: How to Survive without the College Safety Net.

Relationships should build you up, not tear you down. Stephen Chbosky was right; we do "accept the love we think we deserve." Friends, family, chosen family, and partners should be in your life because they are willing to grow with you. If a relationship is on the fast track to nowhere, get off and find another route. A relationship shouldn't be

volatile or dangerous, nor should it thrive solely on Netflix and clubbing. Relationships and friendships shouldn't be a struggle. They should be a joy.

After too many dead-end "relationships" to mention, I finally found someone who was worthy of my love and time. I didn't find my true love in college; I found her three months later, when I realized that I deserved someone who would cherish me as much as I cherish them. With impeccable timing, Krissy Bradbury waltzed into my life and swept me off my feet, and we've been skipping along joyfully ever since.

Krissy is the type of person everyone should have in their life. She's genuine. She's honest. She's supportive. She's intelligent enough to be intimidating, but humble enough to learn from others. Her resilience and her loyalty make her the most admirable woman I know, and she has chosen to share her life with me. She is a woman of her word, and she means what she says. I never have to second-guess her intentions or question her motives. It also helps that she's cute as a button and goofy enough to have late-night karaoke sessions in our living room.

What makes this relationship work is that we motivate and support each other. We push each other to broaden our horizons. (Never in a million years did I expect to run two 5K races and actually enjoy them.) But most of all, our relationship works because we both know that we deserve to be cherished, and we both deserve love and happiness.

Sometimes, you just have to let it be. College is the time where you're allowed and encouraged to form your own identity. For GLBT students, this freedom can be simultaneously freeing and oppressive. Once you figure out who you are, your identity becomes something to be celebrated and obsessively displayed. At my alma mater, GLBT students are encouraged to be open about who they are (which is awesome), but other parts of an individual's identity can be overshadowed. Stepping away from the college environment allows you to simply be you—your gender and sexuality are just one part of your identity and don't need to be your sole distinctions.

I came from a small town in Nebraska where very few people are out of the closet. We all had our suspicions of who was gay, but we sure as hell never talked about it. (Imagine my surprise when, years later, I found out that the majority of my high school friends are gay like me!) When I moved to Augsburg, I was immediately embraced by a welcoming community, and my eventual coming out was respected and celebrated.

With my newly-accepted identity worn proudly on my sleeve, I became a self-appointed spokesperson for everything

regarding gender and sexuality. I proudly brought a lesbian perspective into the classroom, and I performed gender-bending roles in several theater productions. My research and projects tended to focus on GLBT themes I found in classroom material, and I talked about being gay ALL THE TIME. It was exhilarating, this newfound diversity of mine. It was also exhausting.

Though I still proudly identify with and participate in the GLBT community, I've found that no one in the real world (especially at work) actually cares about me being gay. I'm open about my sexuality, but I don't find it necessary to run into every room and shout "I'M GAY I'M GAY I'M GAY" while waving a rainbow flag. People know me as a lesbian, sure. But people also know me as a writer, as an adventurer, as a musician, and so much more. It's such a relief to simply live and let live, to let my whole self be present and not overshadowed by one part of my identity.

Time is on my side...finally. College tricks us into believing that we must always be juggling six hundred different things at once. We have to do everything, and we have to do everything well. To be stagnant, to simply exist, is not acceptable! A college student must excel in her courses, volunteer in the community, participate in extracurricular activities, juggle internships and jobs, and maintain a healthy and active social life! When college ends, it's easy to feel empty and even lost without a constantly full schedule. What's life if it's not fueled by caffeine, stressful all-nighters, deadlines, and the desire to be the best at everything? It's a relief—that's what it is.

As a student who graduated Summa Cum Laude with departmental honors and two degrees, I was used to functioning at an extremely high level at all times. I would rush from work to class to rehearsal, collapse into my bed, and immediately begin the cycle again the next morning. I had to do everything—and I had to be the best. Though I (barely) made it through alive and (mostly) maintained my composure, I wasn't used to a less demanding routine once college ended. Once the joy of graduation wore off, I felt like I was doing nothing with my life except working. I felt empty.

That emptiness turned into depression when all my frantic multi-tasking was replaced by reflection. Who was I without the Theater Department, the Honors Program, and the Feminist Collective? Did an emptier schedule make me a lazy person? Was I sliding down into the depths of mediocrity? After a month or two of self-pity and fear, I realized that carrying a lighter load allowed me to be fully present in everything I do. I can choose where to put my time and effort, and the quality of my involvement has greatly increased. I put my heart into my

KRISSY



"With impeccable timing, Krissy Bradbury waltzed into my life and swept me off my feet, and we've been skipping along joyfully ever since. Krissy is the type of person everyone should have in their life."

work and play, and I can be fully engaged in every situation.

By not running myself into the ground every single day, I've been able to take care of my mental and physical health. I've learned the importance of balance and the value of moderation. I can function at a sustainable level, and I no longer find it necessary to live fast and furiously. Though I sometimes feel a bit stagnant, I can finally appreciate the beauty of my current situation.

Well, class, there you have it. I've given you all my wisdom and wit, and now you must do what you will with it. In five years, I'll most likely have changed my mind about everything I currently believe is true and find my 22-year-old knowledge absolutely hysterical, but I'm okay with that. I'm a work in progress, and I'll always be a student to the lessons of the world. But this time, my education isn't about getting a diploma. It's about enjoying the ride. □

GRADUATION: INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER

By Shane Lueck

DESPITE CURRENT WEATHER FORECASTS, SPRING IS IN THE AIR. THE BIRDS HAVE STARTED CHIRPING AND, BETWEEN UNCHARACTERISTIC APRIL SNOW STORMS, PATCHES OF GRASS ARE GROWING GREEN. FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS, THIS SIGNALS THE END OF ANOTHER SCHOOL YEAR AND, FOR SOME, THE END OF AN ERA. GRADUATION IS A MERE THREE WEEKS AWAY AND THE FUTURE LOOKS DAUNTING. IT'S A FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN. WHAT'S NEXT? AFTER SPENDING SIXTEEN YEARS IN A SCHOOL SETTING, IT CAN BE HEART-WRENCHING TO SAY GOODBYE TO THAT CHAPTER OF LIFE AND HELLO TO THE "REAL WORLD."

The University of Minnesota's GLBTA Programs Office has prepared its student patrons for just this situation. The office sponsors workshops to discuss ways in which a more inclusive environment can be fostered within the university, which hopefully would then transfer outside of the university setting into the workplace as well.

Jason Jackson, the assistant director of the GLBTA Programs Office, says "we're the stop where you come in to find a list of different resources." One example he offered was a relationship between his own office and the university's career services. "We connect students with career services, who we trust will take care of that person. They'll be able to say 'OK, I recognize this person identifies as GLBT' and will act appropriately."

Before students leave the university, the GLBTA Programs Office works to educate them on how the world operates. "It's not all sunshine out there, you have to be realistic," Jackson says. "Sometimes you have to get out there and advocate for yourself." Jackson stresses that although a lot of groundwork

has been completed, society still has a long road ahead, with GLBT-identified people as their own best advocates.

A motivating effort from Jackson's office for students is a mentorship program. A faculty or staff member is connected with a student who identifies as GLBTA. According to Jackson, they will meet periodically throughout the year. "This is so they can build a relationship so the student can ask those hard questions," he says. "This brings out the piece about building a community, which is ever more important."

Focusing primarily on undergraduates, the GLBTA Programs Office works to ensure students are equipped with necessary skills to thrive outside of the university. Jackson mentions the office as being centered on education. "Be it education around talking about gender identity or sexual orientation in addition to race, class, and other intersections," he says. The office works with students to help them develop their skills to be able to discuss these difficult topics within the workplace as well as within their personal relationships.

Continued on page 40 ➔

MORRIE'S
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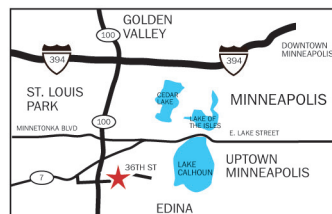
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Felicia Pruitt Brown

FELICIA PURSUED A GRAPHIC
DESIGN MAJOR AND TACKED ON AN
ENGLISH MINOR AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

"I feel like I'm lucky because a lot of people are kind of directionless when they graduate, but I love design and all the possibilities that it entails," Brown says. "I guess but I'm cautiously optimistic."

Born and raised in South Minneapolis, Felicia Pruitt Brown knows these intersections firsthand. Growing up biracial as well as a queer woman, Brown has grown into the self-described role of "an artist, a nerd, and a sometimes activist."

Attending the University of Minnesota, Brown has pursued a graphic design major and tacked on an English minor – but the involvement with campus life doesn't stop there. Brown has been involved with various GLBTQ student groups on

campus. "I really love Tongues Untied because it gives queer people of color a space to come together and just talk about some of our experiences," Brown says.

For any GLBTQ student, Brown suggests getting involved. "Being GLBTQ is like being in a sorority/fraternity sometimes," Brown says. "It's not until college that I really realized how connected everyone is, it's like a giant second family. Meet lots of people, have fun, and try to figure out how to do

whatever you want to do with the rest of your life."

For most college students, these relationships are formed within the residence halls. Brown lived in Lavender House, a GLBTA-centered living community at the university. "You come into a dorm situation not knowing who you're going to end up living with," Brown says. "It's awesome to know that the people around you will at least be supportive of your GLBTQ identity."

What awaits Brown after graduation? The possibilities

are endless. "I feel like I'm lucky because a lot of people are kind of directionless when they graduate, but I love design and all the possibilities that it entails," Brown says. "I guess but I'm cautiously optimistic. It's a little terrifying because I know a lot of things are going to change but there's nothing else I'd rather be doing right now." Currently, Brown is serving as a communications and graphic design intern at OutFront Minnesota and plans to stay on after graduation.

Ricardo Millhouse

"Throughout my college career I found myself asking, 'Would I be the same person I am today if I went to college in the South?'" It was this question which led Millhouse to apply to graduate school and pursue a PhD at Syracuse University.

RICARDO FOCUSED ON
AMERICAN AND URBAN STUDIES
AND IS GRADUATING FROM
MACALESTER COLLEGE
IN ST. PAUL

As a graduating senior at Macalester College in St. Paul, Ricardo Millhouse is a long way from home. Originally hailing from Mobile, Alabama, Millhouse decided to attend school in Minnesota for a new experience and the need to find his voice. "Upon my arrival, I gradually learned how to express myself and feel comfortable in my own skin," he says, "which is something I could not imagine in a place where gay men were shunned."

The American and ur-

ban studies senior reflects on his southern upbringing: "Throughout my college career I found myself asking, 'Would I be the same person I am today if I went to college in the South?'" It was this question which led Millhouse to apply to graduate school and pursue a PhD at Syracuse University. According to Millhouse, he'll be exploring how place and class politics dictate or influence the black body in the American South, particularly black, queer men.

As Millhouse puts the finishing touches on his undergraduate career, he expresses a deep personal impact felt from personalities, politics, and cultures from all walks of life. Four years ago, Millhouse took a leap of faith moving across state borders and leaving his home behind to find his own voice. "My desire to become a voice to those who have been silenced in the South due to their sexual identity emerges from the risk I took four years ago," he says.

For undergraduates, Millhouse is a firm believer of an ongoing learning process. "Never think twice about learning from every experience, bad or good, and learn from anyone you meet," he advises. Living for yourself is another tenet of Millhouse's beliefs. "Seek and live your truth, in spite of opposition!"

(My own story)

Shane
Lueck



**SHANE STUDIED JOURNALISM AND
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN
STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MIN-
NESOTA.**

Contributing to *Lavender Magazine* has allowed me to feel that much-desired connection to the GLBT community and meet amazing people that I would not have been able to were it not for this opportunity.

Growing up in a small, rural town in north-central Minnesota is certainly not the fairy tale life any GLBT person would imagine for themselves, yet that is where my story began. Fortunately, my upbringing didn't involve much in terms of bullying or feeling out of place in high school, but that didn't stop me from wanting more. Like many before me, I dreamed of a big city way of life. With Minneapolis as a backdrop, I began my studies at the University of Minnesota in journalism and African Ameri-

can and African studies.

I was not involved with student groups or the GLBTA Programs Office as an undergraduate. Instead, I found solace in writing. Contributing to *Lavender Magazine* has allowed me to feel that much-desired connection to the GLBT community and meet amazing people that I would not have been able to were it not for this opportunity. Journalism, for me, was the perfect avenue through which I could not only express myself but also connect to the movers and shakers that I would

have otherwise admired from afar.

And so, to any undergraduates, I say that your outlet doesn't have to be a student group or getting involved on campus at all. I know all of the fliers and brochures advocate for it, but why not be unconventional? For you, your calling might just be off campus through some other avenue just waiting for you to explore it. Put on your shoes, grab your coat, and discover what the city has to offer.

As I look forward to graduation, I am relieved that the end

is in sight, but also terrified of the unknown abyss that I stare out into. At this point, I haven't the slightest clue what the future holds for me. Strangely, I'm OK with that. I've got my seatbelt on and I'm ready for this wild ride called life.

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SUMMER SURVIVAL AND TRAVEL: MAKING TIME WITH THE KIDS A JOY!

By Tina Feigal

SCHOOL WILL SOON BE OUT, AND PARENTS NEED SOME HANDY TIPS FOR SURVIVING AND EVEN THRIVING DURING SUMMER WITH THE KIDS. MAYBE YOU'RE ANTICIPATING SOME INTENSE BEHAVIORS FROM YOUR CHILDREN WHEN THERE'S LESS STRUCTURE AND MORE DOWN TIME. OR YOU MIGHT BE PLANNING A LONG CAR OR PLANE TRIP WITH THEM, AND WOULD LOVE TO KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT GO BETTER THAN THAT LAST "EVENTFUL" TRIP TO GRANDMA'S. HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR KEEPING THE FUN ALIVE BY REDUCING THE POTENTIAL FOR MELTDOWNS, SIBLING ARGUMENTS, AND NON-COMPLIANCE THIS SUMMER.

1. Plan ahead WITH your kids, so they know what to expect. Intense kids do not respond well to surprises. Put a calendar next to their beds, so they know what tomorrow brings.

2. Remember, there is no substitute for sleep. If your child is cranky, lying down may be the only solution. Try to avoid sleep

deprivation by keeping the kids on a regular sleep schedule, even when they are having fun. The payoffs will be enormous.

3. Take time for yourself. Do not let all the "pulls" of summer activities wear you down. Take a relaxing bath, sit outside with no media and listen to nature, read a novel, enjoy the present moment.

4. Whenever your usually inflexible child weathers a change with no storm, give him or her heartfelt appreciation: "When you realized our plans had changed, and you stayed so calm, I was really impressed!" This could be right before you see her start to wind up. Any opportunity to reward success will be golden!

Give each child a job for the trip. One child can keep track of where you are on the map. Another can be the one who hands everyone the snacks, and another can take pictures. Someone needs to journal about the trip, so have a spiral notebook handy. And older kids should take care of the needs of younger ones.

5. Put the kids in charge of their sibling issues. Say in advance, "I know you have disagreements sometimes, and I trust you to work them out in nice language. If you really need help, I'm here, but mostly I think you can do this." When an issue arises, simply say, "How do you want to handle that with Christina?"

6. To kids, summer feels like the time for relaxation and NOT taking orders. Be sure to acknowledge that your children *need* down time to lie on their backs and stare at the clouds, and make a point to allow for it. Say, "This is your own afternoon off, and you can do whatever you want to with it." When the need for self-direction gets met, the willingness to take direction from others can increase.

7. Get comfortable with dirt. It's summer, and dirt is a sure sign your kids are engaging with nature and enjoying themselves!

For the summer trip with your children: Stop and think about whether you are feeling excited or anxious about it. If you're anxious, read on ...

As with all issues with challenging behavior, a new way of thinking about your experience with your child can be very helpful. To re-think a vacation may seem difficult, but rather than fill your mind with dread, imagine 10 hours in the car as a time to build family intimacy.

Here are 15 tips for making your trip the best it can be:

1. A week before you leave, hold a family meeting that focuses on the trip. Have the children help you create a list of travel rules that start with "no", and establish that a 30-second break will be the result of breaking a rule. Yes, the break can take place in the car, in a restaurant, at the water park, in the motel, with relatives present – wherever and whenever it is needed. And decide that it's not a punishment. It's simply "a procedure for what we do when we do something we don't want to do." Speak from the children's perspective and predict their success: "We want you to have a wonderful time on our trip, and not be in trouble at all. We think vacation should be fun for you, and we know that you can be successful. Remember how fabulous you were when we went out to eat last week? This will be like that, only longer, with more chances to be successful." Be sure that the rule list is in the car

with you. One of the rules should be, "No not having fun."

2. Give each child a job for the trip. One child can keep track of where you are on the map. Another can be the one who hands everyone the snacks, and another can take pictures. Someone needs to journal about the trip, so have a spiral notebook handy. And older kids should take care of the needs of younger ones.

3. Be sure that the kids have a seating arrangement that sets them up for success. If possible, seat them so that they cannot touch each other with hands or feet. If it's not possible, make the rules about touching very, very clear. Mention that kind touching is welcome!

4. Bring along plenty of workbooks, crayons, markers, and games. Limit screen time to one hour per day. Lap desks, with a flat surface on top and bean bag material on the bottom, work well in the car.

5. Plan for car games, such as the old standby alphabet game. Some book suggestions are: *Are We There Yet?* by Richard Salter, *The Rand McNally Kids' Road Atlas*, (Backseat Books) and *The Amazing Backseat Book-a-Ma-Thing* (Klutzn Press).

6. Have a cooler with plenty of snacks and drinks. Include the kids' input when you shop for these, but remind them in advance that there will be no junk food. Granola bars, trail mix, fruit, veggies, and juice with no high fructose corn syrup are ideal.

7. Give heartfelt appreciation for kind words between the kids, sitting nicely, asking for things in a gentle tone of voice, and pointing out interesting sights. Say, "This is exactly what we decided on in our family meeting, and I could not be happier. I think it must make you happy, too." (This is the "building family intimacy" part.)

8. Keep your tone of voice the same – calm and relaxed – even when things go awry. You always have the choice to keep the emotion level low. Choose to let the kids know through your tone that nothing is going to spoil this good time, which is very reassuring to them.

9. Make sure everyone has a pillow, and bring along their favorite blankets. Say, "I want you to be so comfortable in the car."

10. If a child asks the same thing over and over, first redirect the conversation to another interesting topic: "Show me what you drew on your paper," or "Did you notice that the trees here are different from the

ones near our house? I wonder what they call those trees." And if your child persists, ask the question back with kindness. "You are wondering when we're going to be there. I am wondering that, too! Who can help us figure this out?" Notice that you may need to take a running break if the issue is just too much time in the seat belt.

11. Use this time together to talk about what you love about each child. The others will catch on to it, and begin to see what they love about one another, as well. "Cecily always wants to know where we are... she might be a travel guide or geography teacher some day!" "Brandon is our cleaner upper...do we ever love having him on our trip!" "Sam loves to point out the fun things he sees. I think he is a fabulous travel companion."

12. Travel time is an opportunity to cultivate healthy curiosity in children. They will have many opinions on what could be true. Don't insist on being right all the time. Just let them have an opinion, and respond with, "I think that's an interesting way to think about it," or "You could be right about that." Being right isn't the most important thing. Learning to think creatively and question what you see in the world is.

13. Let the kids know that this is your vacation, too. Plan for adult time in advance, and tell the children you will be taking it each day. If they can anticipate it, they are much more likely to accept it and comply with bedtime or mid-day downtime.

14. Anticipation is always the key. If you talk about what will happen tomorrow, in an hour, or in five minutes, children have a much easier time accepting the changes. This is particularly true on vacation.

15. Have fun yourself. Let the kids know that you are delighted when a bald eagle sails by, or you have a great trip down the water slide. Let them see that you are excited about a wonderful photo you took, or about a journal entry you made, or a meal that tastes exceptionally good to you. Share your inner world with them...that's how they learn to enjoy themselves as adults one day.

Enjoy, and blog about your vacation successes on www.facebook.com/parenting-mojo. ■

Tina Feigal is a parent coach and trainer at the Center for the Challenging Child, St. Paul, MN.

SUMMER, FAITH, CAMP, AND ACTIVISM WITH ROSS MURRAY OF GLAAD AND THE NAMING PROJECT

By Ross Murray
Photos by Andy Lien



Summer has always been my favorite season of the year. When I was growing up, summer was an endless string of opportunity and possibility. I rarely ever got bored. In fact, I felt busier than ever. The non-stop string of camp, trips, and various adventures, kept me active and engaged so much that I got a little sad when summer started coming to an end.

Looking back, I can now see how much my summer experiences growing up have shaped and impacted my life. Since then, I've always looked forward to the opportunities that summer can offer, and, frankly, I still feel busier than ever in the summer.

One of the experiences that shaped me so strongly growing up was my time at summer camp. I attended a Lutheran church camp, and it really made me the person that I am today. I found friends who accepted me for who I was, even before I had accepted myself. As I returned to camp summer after summer, I rose through the ranks of the camp. Going from being a camper, to a two-week volunteer, to a staff-in-training, to a counselor, and eventually to a program coordinator.

When I grew up, I joined with two friends to launch an GLBT Christian youth camp. The three of us had attended different Lutheran bible camps, and we created an experience that reflected the wonderful experiences that we had growing up, with

an openness toward GLBT youth. It was gay church camp. We called our program The Naming Project.

The Naming Project worked for many reasons. The youth came from such a variety of backgrounds. Some were devoutly within one tradition, while others came from a much more vague sense of spirituality, while others were still figuring out what they believe. Within the program, youth could express who they are and what they believe, and explore all of those in a safe environment. Plus, it took kids away from the pressures of their everyday lives, which gave them freedom to question and explore.

This summer will be the tenth camp that we will hold. We've had over 100 youth participate in our program over the years, and I can see that our work has left a lasting impression on them. Some students are still questioning who they are and who God made them to be, while others are out and proud, ready to share their God-given fabulousness with the world! This mix of youth really help one another.

But creating a safe space within a hostile world wasn't enough. I wanted everywhere to be a safe space, and as I looked around, I realized how few of those safe spaces there were. Doing GLBT advocacy work was a natural extension of what I was doing with The Naming Project, and the two complement each other well.

Today, I find myself working at GLAAD, the national GLBT media advocacy organization. For over 25 years, GLAAD has worked with news, entertainment and social media to bring culture-changing stories of GLBT people into millions of homes and workplaces every day. It's an organization that changes culture to be more GLBT-affirming through telling the stories of GLBT people, by challenging the negative portrayal of GLBT people, and by helping grassroots organizations communicate effectively.

I do GLAAD's religion work, focusing on GLBT people of faith, and GLBT religious organizations. Just like at The Naming Project, I'm finding that GLBT people run the gamut of being heavily involved in a tradition/denomination to having a personal non-dogmatic spirituality. All of these perspectives and stories need to be told, and often they are invisible.

The relationship between faith and GLBT people has never been hotter right now, and that's what makes my work at GLAAD so exciting. I got to use the same skills that I developed at camp to reach out to people and help them tell their story about what they believe and why they support GLBT equality.

One of the challenges that we face is that GLBT people of faith are underrepresented in the media. When talking about GLBT issues, 75% of the religious voices are on the

Scenes around Bay Lake Camp, where The Naming Project is in residence each summer in Minnesota. (L-R): Water of Life, outdoor spirituality, team-building, and Ross Murray with his infectious grin.



anti-equality side. This, despite the fact that more and more religious people and denominations are making moves to be more GLBT inclusive. The stereotype still exists that religious people oppose GLBT equality, but it is being challenged.

Evidence of this challenge came in the last election. Minnesota defeated a constitutional marriage amendment, and the tipping point was people of faith. From my vantage point at GLAAD, religious people were prominent in Minnesota, as well as Maine, Maryland, and Washington. Even major news outlets took notice. The frame of gay vs. religion is dying, and I got to be a part of it!

At GLAAD, I get interns, students who are still studying with the dream of doing GLBT advocacy. This summer, two of my interns are former Naming Project campers. They were shaped by their summer camp experience and want to work out in the wider world for GLBT equality.

In a way, my GLBT and religion work are coming full circle. Campers, who I once saw as teenagers struggling to reconcile their faith and GLBT identity, are now going to advance GLBT equality for all of society. Not to sound too patriarchal, but I can see myself in them. They figured out their GLBT identity much earlier than I did. They were given opportunities to reconcile their faith and sexual orientation. I hope that someday, every youth can grow up knowing who they are, and that God made them, knows them, and loves them, just as they are.

NOW THAT YOU'VE SEEN THE STORY OF MY LIFE, THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN.

If you are a young GLBT person, who is

looking at this vast summer stretch ahead of you in wonder of how you can fill the time, let me offer a few suggestions. I am going to throw out a lot of different ideas, knowing that different things will work for different people. And you always have to vet my ideas with your own reality. But, you could make the summer of 2013 an experience that will not only give you a super-fun and meaningful summer, but also set you up on the track to be an agent of change for the rest of your life.

HOW TO HAVE AN GLBT-TASTIC SUMMER:

Go to camp. Of course, I'll suggest The Naming Project. If you are interested in spirituality, specifically Christianity, and want to explore what it means to be a religious and GLBT person, then it's a good fit for you. Even if that's not your cup of tea, there are many other camp options. Camp is different than 'real life.' People are much more honest about/with themselves. When you are away from the world, priorities shift, and community becomes very important. It also can be uncomfortable, making you think about those things that you would rather be put off. www.thenamingproject.org

Learn about the GLBT movement: If you haven't already, sign up to receive email alerts and newsletters from GLBT organizations. GLAAD keeps its members informed of its media advocacy work, and we invite you to help us monitor the media and share important stories with your friends, family, and social media contacts. www.glaad.org

Get an internship. Some internships are paid, and sometimes you can find stipends to help you do work that advances GLBT

equality. Even if they are unpaid, internships at social justice organizations are great on resumes and can help you in the future. You can stay local, or if you are adventurous, spend a summer helping one of the national GLBT organizations. I know GLAAD is always looking for good interns!

Volunteer. Last summer thousands of people volunteered for MN United for All Families, leading to a historic defeat of the anti-marriage equality amendment. Even if you are too young to vote, you are never too young to knock on doors, volunteer at events, or even run the photocopier for a couple of days.

Visit an GLBT-Friendly Faith Community: Experiment with one of the hundreds of welcoming places of worship around the area. Even if you haven't been for years, or never been, it's always worth the experiment. You can find more by visiting www.welcomingresources.org

Join an GLBT social organization. Play softball. Sing in a choir. Join a book club. Spend time doing what you love with GLBT people. You can meet some great friends and mentors, who also enjoy doing the same things you do.

Go to Pride. And when you do, visit every booth. Don't just hang out at the same stage all day, or going for the free stuff (as cool as the free stuff is!). Find out how many different GLBT-serving organizations exist out there. Learn about a corner of the community that you haven't explored before. ■

Learn more about GLAAD at www.glaad.org and about The Naming Project at www.thenamingproject.org.

GIFT GUIDE FOR GRADS

By Andy Lien

Have you got a graduate in your life? It's hard to think of what to give someone who's being pushed out into the world of adulthood...who may be going on to further studies or their first desk job. What can probably be assumed is that the student way of life will want to be shed for what may be considered the "real world" of real pots and pans that match and furniture not purchased at a yard sale. What can also probably be assumed is that unless the graduate was an Econ or Computer Science major, their new budget will probably suit more of the "Goodwill hunting" than not. So, if you're in the position to get your graduate something that'll cost but last, I offer up these ideas.

Noise-Canceling Headphones

Workplace noise is much different from dorm cacophonies...and there's much more at stake if you can't get your work done from your cube in a hive of worker bees with varying decibel levels. My coworker's noise-canceling headphones are Wonder Woman branded and he's very proud of them. While he's very secure in his position here at this GLBT publication, I don't know if all new grads entering the workplace should go so bold as red-and-yellow-spangled gear. Try giving your grad one of the tested-and-true (while still subtle) versions that range from \$300+ down to around \$60, depending on the quality and style. According to some reviews, the noise-canceling qualities of the higher-end BOSE Quiet Comfort models are rivaled by more-affordable options like the Phiaton PS 20 NC Active Noise Canceling Earphones which sell from Amazon for \$99.00.

They're small and subtle...definitely not loud in appearance.

\$99.00, black or white
www.amazon.com



Real Sheets for a Real Bed

If your graduate has been living in dorms for the past four years, they might have those weird, extra-long twin bed sheets that will never fit any bed that they will ever sleep in again.

Time for them to launder and pay those forward to an undergrad. If you're responsible for helping your graduate acquire their new bed for their new home, you'll already know the size of sheets they'll require. If not, ask someone closer to them what size they'll need and get them a nice new set of sheets with a high thread count...they'll probably be the nicest set they'll own for a while. You might get a funny look when they open the gift...something akin to socks...but give them the "I'm older and know more than you and you'll thank me later" look. You do know better and they will thank you later. My suggestion? Go with JCPenney.

Not only did JCPenney swing big for same-sex couples in their ads this last year, but I still have a monogrammed towel that was a high school graduation present in 1995. Their linens are built to last. You can go more classic with colors in the Royal Velvet WrinkleGuard 440tc collection, the Royal Velvet Pima 660tc collection, or Jonathan Adler has some bright sheets that will add a splash of color to any bedroom at 300tc.

\$30 - \$150

www.jcpenney.com



A Bookcase

Your graduate (and maybe you) spent a mint on books to get to where they are today. Some students sell their books back for a bit of cash, some hold on to them until the information in them is well past relevant, but they still look great as part of our daily surroundings (and as validation that we had time to read something longer than an article, once). Moving out into the world means leaving built-in dorm desks and shelves behind. What's to be done with all the books? Storage or new shelves. And, where can a great number of affordable new shelves be found? IKEA. Whether you're ordering online or wandering the wonderland in Bloomington, there are plenty of bookcases to house the collection that ranges from Microbiology to Medieval Art to Meditation. Choose stand-alone bookcases or more complex built-in shelving systems, which are especially savvy options if you're cohabiting with other bookkeepers. For an unknown space and number of books, I suggest the Expedite--it's wide and tall with a number of spaces for a number of items...and can also be used as a room divider in case the graduate lives in a space with an open floor plan.

\$199

www.ikea.com



Cookware

I used my parents' old Revere Ware for years after college, which worked just fine. A new set of cookware would've been stupendous, though. Not the best set, mind you, since many new graduates have roommates who might not have the best cooking or dishwashing skills...but a mid-level cookware set would be very appropriate. You can even search for "starter" sets online and a bevy of options will appear. Set aside your mid-adulthood dinner party conversations about whether All-Clad or Costco's brand of similar pans are better and think like a young adult: Can I put it in the dishwasher? Will the food stick and burn onto it? Will the world end if I somehow ruin a piece of it? This is when I usually get to my suggestion of Kitchen Essentials from Calphalon Hard Anodized Nonstick 10 piece Cookware Set from Target. It's a respected brand, the set includes a number of sizes but there aren't too many pieces for a beginner, and they're nonstick but actually can handle years of being run through the dishwasher without being rendered worthless (I can attest to this from experience).

\$199

www.target.com

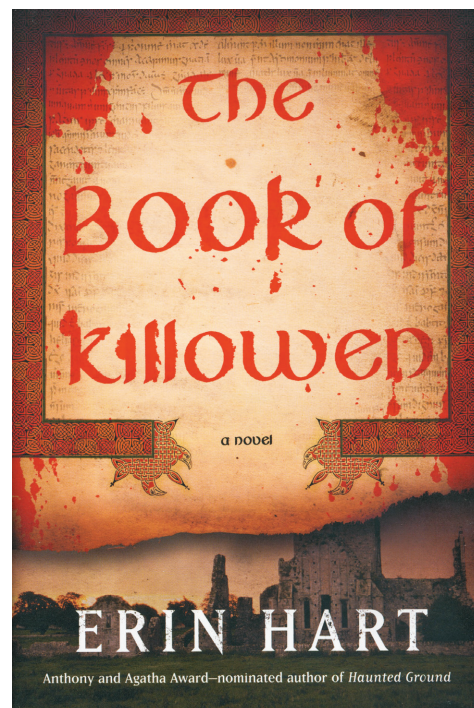




THE BOOK OF KILLOWEN

Erin Hart - Scribner - \$26

The fourth in Hart's fine Nora Gavin series finds American pathologist Nora and her Irish lover archaeologist Cormac Maguire, called to Killowen Bog in County Tipperary. The corpse of an Iron Age bog man has been found— in a car trunk together with recently murdered Dublin TV host, Benedict Kavanagh. Brought together by the power of words, Kavanagh, self-considered expert on Irish philosopher John Scottus Eriugena, verbally humiliated his guests; the ancient body was viciously murdered for a manuscript concerning the then heretical Eriugena. Will it, too, be discovered? Hart blends her wide knowledge of Iron Age history and monastic manuscripts with her own mastery of language, Irish and English, to deliver an intricately plotted novel a good notch or two above ordinary mystery fare.



MURDER AT SPIRIT FALLS: A NO ORDINARY WOMEN MYSTERY

Barbara Deese and Dorothy Olson - North Star Press - \$14.95

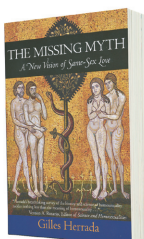
The five—Robin, Cate, Grace, Louise, and Foxy—form the No Ordinary Women book club, reveling in yearly retreats at Robin's isolated century-old hunting lodge in the Wisconsin woods. Previous visits have involved skinny-dipping under Spirit Falls, fine dining and literary discussions, but this year's unwelcome visitor, a body floating in the haunted pool, dampens their anticipated festivities. Officials are ready to write the death off as accidental, but the extraordinary women believe there's dirty work afoot and risk their own lives to investigate. Deese and Olson offer a vivid team. Robin is a nature photographer and cancer survivor, Cate (Catherine Running Wolf) draws on the intuition of her Cherokee inheritance, and the other three their own specialties. Watch for their upcoming *Spirited Away*.



NATURAL PREDATORS: A MAHU INVESTIGATION

Neil Placky - MLR Press - \$14.99

The latest in Placky's Mahu Investigations with homicide detective Kimo Kanapa'aka and his life partner, fire investigator Mike Riccardi. Along with mystery and murder, *Natural Predators* is an exploration of family: of decisions Kimo and Mike are making about adoption; about family secrets involving the past; even broader family issues of statehood—a murdered senator's opposition to Hawaii's statehood back in 1959. Mike is involved in a set fire in a building housing boxes of old records—and a body. Kimo and his police partner Ray Donne are drawn in when the body is identified as an Island notable, retired attorney Alexander Fields. A witness to the conflagration is homeless teen Dakota, whom Mike and Kimo take in to foster as they plan their own family. Placky seamlessly meshes action and emotion.



THE MISSING MYTH: A NEW VERSION OF SAME-SEX LOVE

Gilles Herrada - Select Books - \$19.95

Every person's life needs meaning, and for too long, charges Herrada, homosexuals have done without. In this complex yet accessible book, Herrada seeks to show homosexuals the way to self-understanding and self-determination, freed from subjection to the myths of others. He uses the categories of "It," "We," and "I" to explain: Empirically, "It"—homosexuality—has existed over time in many species, and must offer some evolutionary advantage to humanity. Social changes after the introduction of monotheism denigrated homosexuality, bringing the historical and cultural category, "We." Today, creating a transition from "context determined" to "context aware," homosexuals can create a new mythos representing the healthy "I," and an understanding that a spectrum of human sexualities exist, and all play a part in the human condition.

The Book of Brian

A Gay Mormon's Reflections on *The Book of Mormon*

I bought my tickets for *The Book of Mormon* the day they went on sale. And for months I counted the days, excited to give my boyfriend a glimpse into my unique Mormon past. It's a past I don't talk about much. Being a gay ex-Mormon is a pretty exclusive club, and frankly, there aren't many people in Minnesota who understand. So to say that I was excited to see my unique history come under the limelight would be an understatement. Strangely though, the thing that was most on my mind as I sat in the theater that evening was my grandmother.

In 1990, just before she died, Grandma and I had a puzzling conversation. Like most of the grown-ups in my life, she had noticed my fondness for show tunes, flowers, and a variety of other things that small boys in rural Idaho ought not care about. "Brian," she told me. "Some boys don't get married when they grow up. And you know what? If you grow and don't get married, that's okay. Doesn't matter what the Church tells you... it's okay! You understand?" I nodded, even though I didn't.

A few years later, when I figured out what she meant, I discovered that she was right: the higher-ups of the Mormon Church weren't as amiable as Grandma was when it came to "not getting married," and I faced the painful reality of becoming an ex-Mormon. I've spent the better part of two decades trying to get my mind around that. You see, coming from a place like Idaho ("Little Utah," as I affectionately call it), being Mormon isn't just my religion; it's my cultural heritage. "You're of pioneer stock!" Grandma used to tell me with pride, noting that every person on both sides of my family tree was descended from Mormon pioneers.

To be sure, Mormon doctrine is no a longer a part of my life. At around 19 or 20 (when I was supposed to be going on a mission) I came to a difficult but necessary decision. Unable to reconcile my life with my faith, I had to choose. And so I did. Closing

the door on my Mormon history was hard, but I learned to live with it. I didn't look back.

And so it was, that I found myself sitting at *The Book of Mormon* thinking a lot about Grandma, and other parts of my Mormon past. I appreciated the connection to things I could laugh about. Holy underwear, polygamy, and the planet called Kolob (where Heavenly Father lives) are topics that beg to be mocked, and *The Book of Mormon* didn't disappoint.

The storyline of Mormon missionaries in Uganda does take a few artistic liberties, but it's more or less an accurate depiction of what life is like for young Mormon men—All-American boys just trying to become Gods. Mormon doctrine does in fact teach that "as man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." And seriously, who among us doesn't want our own planet full of minions?

Normally, acknowledgements of Mormon culture, and its relation to my past can get me pretty angry. (You should have seen me during the election!). But I suppose that's what we all do to suppress memories that hurt. Something happened during *The Book of Mormon* though. I was laughing so hard that I couldn't get angry, and I let my guard down. Feelings of melancholy crept in and I found myself thinking about all the good parts of Mormonism that I had to give up because I didn't want the bad parts, and how much I miss some of those things. I miss the strong sense of familiarity that the church offered me, and then took away. I miss feeling proud of my ancestors. I miss the belief that our church had to be the "true" one because some very smart people told me it was, and I believed them. I miss praying, and knowing that God was listening to me since I was a Mormon and Mormons were right. I miss the common bonds of faith and history... the feeling of community that comes from conviction, and the fortitude to move forward even in life's darkest moments because I too believed. I miss communing with my people.

Mostly, I miss my grandma.

Elder Cunningham and Elder Price made picture-perfect missionaries in *The Book of Mormon*—the kind of missionary I was supposed to be. I could have counted a dozen boys from my high school yearbook to fit the stereotype for each of them. And yes, in spite of (or maybe because of) their singular view of the world, these protagonists were able to offer something to a community ravaged by some very adult issues: clan warfare, AIDS, and female genital mutilation. Seeing those topics addressed though comedy had a moderate shock effect, but the larger lesson was about faith. As I left the play that night, and sauntered over memories I hadn't touched in years, I thought a lot about faith.

Faith, as *The Book of Mormon* showed us, doesn't have to be about religion. Faith is about having something to hold onto, even if it's really different than someone's other something. Faith for me can be found in both the gay community where I live, and in the Mormon history I brought with me. Faith can show up in little moments of joy where you least expect it, like having a night out with good friends, taking time to remember my grandma, or holding my boyfriend's hand. And trust me—when it seems that there isn't much else in life, a little faith goes a long damn way.

Through some fantastic wit and biting irreverence, *The Book of Mormon* helped me understand my own history a little better. Homosexuality and Mormonism are each responsible for some of the best, and some of the worst moments in my life, and I wouldn't change either of those parts of me. The spaces collide sometimes, but I can laugh about that. *The Book of Mormon* drove home another lesson that Grandma taught me years ago—that we should never take ourselves too seriously, because laughter is the best (and sometimes the only) response to pain. ■

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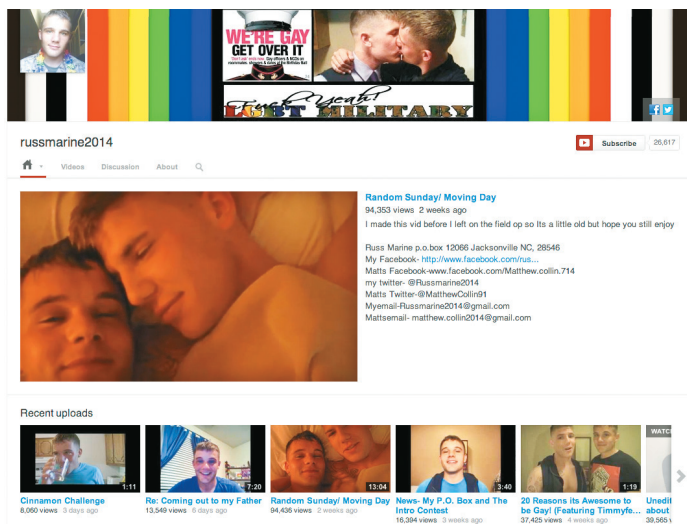
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America's Favorite Gay Marines

'Coming out of the closet' is a quintessential part of the GLBT community. We are a minority group that has to tell our families and our friends we are different. There are millions of stories in the world about our journeys but sometimes there is one that is so special it deserves retelling.

This story comes at a time when our laws and our society intersected and allowed the opportunity for these two individuals to do something good for their fellow man. With the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, they were finally allowed to tell their stories and they have done so in an honest, courageous, and selfless way.

Let me introduce you to Russ and Matt, two of America's favorite gay marines.

I found their video essays on Youtube. They are the brainchild of Russ, a young marine from Indiana who is stationed in Jacksonville, North Carolina. They also include his boyfriend Matt, another marine who is from Ohio. Their 'coming out' stories aren't much different than most in the GLBT community. However, they didn't stop at telling the stories. Russ and Matt have made 'coming out' their mission to help others. I interviewed them by phone on April 14, 2013. This is their tale.

We begin with Russ.

Russ decided to tell people he is gay. He'd told a few marine friends at first. Russ said, "I came out to a friend of mine and it went so well. The [marine] said, 'Man, I don't care.' I came out to a couple more friends and they all said the same thing." In fact, "coming out" in the Marine Corps was such a positive experience, he wanted to share it with others. "What's the best way for me to tell others about this amazing thing that just happened? My brothers in the Marine Corps have come to accept me for who I am. I said screw it, I'll make a YouTube video about it." And so he did. But, he didn't stop there.

He then made a video called, "Gay Military, come out already." In this video essay he urges other GLBT marines to come out of the closet. His reasons were two-fold. First, he believed with the repeal of DADT, GLBT people in the military today have a responsibility to pay back those who'd worked so hard to make it happen. Russ said, "There were so many people who wanted to come out before the repeal and they didn't get their chance."

There was even a more powerful reason he believed marines should "come out already." News stories tell of the horrific suicide rate among marines. The same is true in the GLBT community. Russ said, "When you add those things together it's just ter-

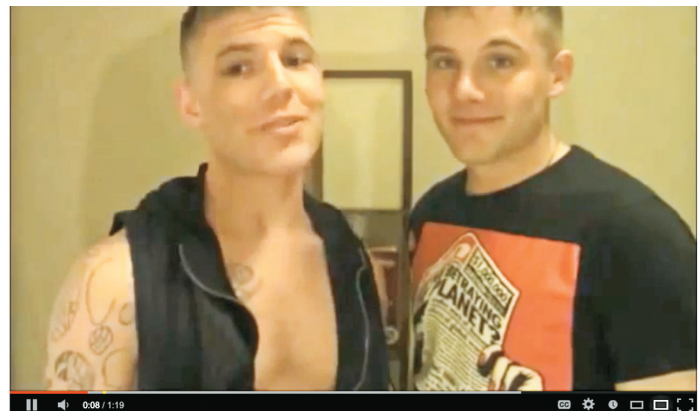
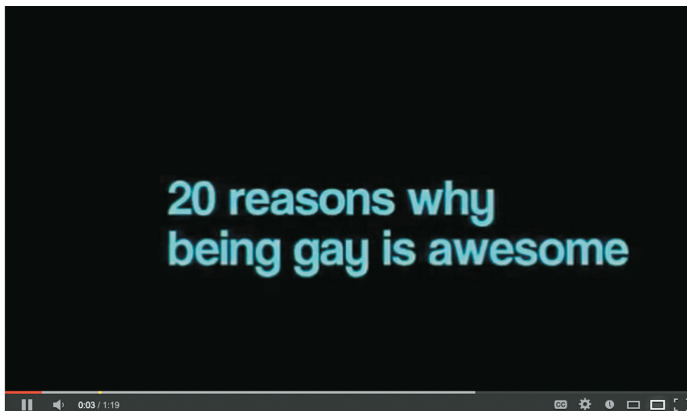
rible. Coming out is one thing you do to feel better about yourself. It gets rid of that depression. I know. I went through it." Instead of coming out, dealing with it, and getting on with his life, Russ felt he had a higher purpose. He would do what he could to show others 'coming out' was necessary for a happy, healthy life.

Enter Matt.

Matt's 'coming out' was via a different social media venue. He came out to everyone he knew on Facebook. His experience with the marines was like Russ'. "Actually it's been very positive. Aside from a few people here and there, ninety-nine percent of the people I've come across have been totally accepting of everything I am." Of course, not everyone was overjoyed with him revealing his sexuality.

In a video made by Russ called, "Unedited interview with Matt about coming out," Matt explained his father struggled and his older brother isn't really talking with him right now. But, he doesn't regret how he did it. "I don't think they liked that I came out on Facebook to everyone but I had to do it. It was like ripping a Bandaid off. It's hard to come out to one person at a time and I just needed to do it."

This is something else that makes Russ'



video essays quite special. Russ came out to his mother over the phone and videotaped it. He wanted to show just how difficult, uncomfortable, and trying the process is but is worth it in the end.

Russ told his mother by phone because she's in Indiana and he's in North Carolina. Because of the distance, he couldn't just drop by and tell her. An incident made him realize he needed to tell her sooner rather than later. "I was just sick of lying about things. The day before [he told her], I'd went on a date and I'd wanted to tell my mom about it. I remember having to change the name and I hated doing that." He realized this couldn't wait. He had to tell her the truth.

In 'Marine comes out to Mom,' we watch as he fidgets with a painful grin on his face waiting for a response from her. The uncomfortable silence as she takes in what he's said is deafening. Russ begs her to tell him what she thinks. When I asked what was going through his head, Russ said, "The whole time I was thinking 'please say something, please say something.'" In a later video, he interviews his mother in person. She expresses worry about his safety as a gay man.

Matt's family wasn't worried about his physical safety. But they were worried about possible "social death." He said they fear "my

life will never be the same as a straight person." That doesn't concern him. He believes coming out was the right thing to do. But, there are downsides and Russ hasn't been afraid to show the process, warts and all.

Russ' biological father no longer speaks to him. I asked why he included those painful, embarrassing parts in the video essays. Russ explained, "Because, people need to hear it. Yeah it sucks. I wanted to tell true stories and not everything is good. I guess I wanted to prepare people who are coming out. It's not always going to be great. But, it's worth it."

One of the benefits Russ got from doing his videos is a cute marine boyfriend from Cleveland.

Matt knew about Russ and what he was doing with his videos before they ever met. "I really enjoyed and agree with the messages he's putting out there." At one point, they were at the same event and "I saw him and I said to him, you are the infamous Russ Marine." They started dating and eventually Russ got Matt in front of the camera with him.

Matt recalls, "When I started dating Russ, I had no intention of being part of it. Then he wanted to do the 'Boyfriend Tag' video. He turned on the camera and we just went for it." This video has serious parts, but it's also

playful and joyful. Several of Russ' videos are about the happy part of being gay. It's not all grit and pain. There is a love of life in the interplay between coming out and becoming comfortably gay in these videos.

Last time I checked, 'Boyfriend Tag' had a quarter of a million hits on YouTube. Matt said it "feels really good we are reaching so many people." Russ, on the other hand, had a more jubilant feeling about the message of 'Boyfriend tag.' "When you meet a guy and you want to scream it from the rooftops, you don't have to. You can use Youtube."

Every GLBT person's 'coming out' story is different. But, within those stories are certain aspects most stories share. There are people who surprise you with their acceptance. Some do not understand and may reject us. It is stressful, difficult, and anxiety-ridden. The process is also empowering, liberating, and joyful. The stories of Russ and Matt are all those things. Their willingness to share it with others gives us all a reminder of the importance of 'coming out.' It also gives those who have yet to come out a taste of what happiness being out can bring.

Check out Russmarine2014's videos on Youtube. [□](#)



Much Ado About Nothing

Who'd have thought "compromise" is such an ugly idea?

During my interview with Richard Carl-bom of Minnesotans United for All Families, I raised the idea of pressing for civil union legislation if same-sex marriage was something that couldn't pass. He dismissed the idea completely and asked me to read a study on what a disaster civil unions were in New Jersey. I read the study to which they referred. Jake Loesch, the Minnesota United communications director, sent me a link.

I carefully read through the commission's report and noted their findings. In this study, from back in 2008, there were stories of health care professionals who didn't know what civil unions were and comparisons to segregation but what I couldn't find was a substantive difference between their civil union law and a same-sex marriage law. What the commission found is we are treated differently because people don't understand our relationships. Ignorance doesn't seem to care what it's called.

For example, from page one of the 'Legal, Medical, Economic & Social Consequences of New Jersey's Civil Union Law', they report the following:

"So, [Naomi] asked the attending emergency room physician to tell her what was happening with me.... And he said, "who are you?" And she said, "well, I'm her partner." And he said, "I can't give you any information, you know, I need her consent." And I wasn't in any state of mind to give my consent.... And she had to explain to him what civil unions were. And he wasn't, you know, quite sure at first. He was reluctant to give my information. He did not understand, and hadn't heard of civil unions before."

This is a heart-wrenching account that no one should have to face. But, the doctor simply didn't know what their relationship was. He didn't want to hand out the woman's medical condition information to just anyone and we have laws to keep such things

confidential. Clearly the doctor didn't know what a "civil union" meant but would he have believed her if she said "wife?" That would seem to have caused the same amount of confusion with this health care professional.

It's a fascinating study and if you are as nerdy as me, please take the time to read it. The evidence and findings included show we have a society that doesn't really understand the nature of our relationships or the tact needed in social situations. But it didn't find any substantive differences between civil unions and marriage except intangible ones. Like the following from page two of the report from a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School:

"Based on research and my years of working with gay people who have experienced stigma or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, I believe that second-class citizenship, now institutionalized in some states in the form of civil unions, contributes to increased rates of anxiety, depression and substance-use disorders in marginalized populations."

Good heavens. Can anyone in the GLBT community honestly say they've never experienced any stigma or discrimination based on sexual orientation? Anyone? Are we really such basket cases using the term "civil unions" will lead us to endless whiskey guzzling and Prozac popping? Preposterous.

I exaggerate because we all experience major and minor traumas and unfair treatment regardless of what legal recognition of our relationships is called. It seems a bit dramatic to say having the same benefits and obligations called something different is "second-class citizenship." We politically have the same rights we always did as citizens. Calling our relationships by a different legal term hardly keeps us in the back of a bus or prevents us from eating at whatever lunch counter we'd like.

In fact, civil unions do provide the same protections and responsibilities as same-sex

marriage as the study found on page 29. It isn't the civil union law that makes a difference in legal situations but the federal Defense of Marriage Act.

"Federal DOMA continues to obstruct access to equal financial benefits of marriage for civil union couples, and would continue to do so even if New Jersey were to enact marriage. There are over 1,000 federal rights and benefits of marriage that civil union couples cannot enjoy because of DOMA, which defines marriage for purposes of federal law as the union between one man and one woman. As noted in the Commission's first report, DOMA permits employers to discriminate against same-sex couples in the provision of health insurance benefits."

Regardless of what it's called, federal law is the culprit and not civil union legislation in New Jersey. Of course, in Minnesota we don't have to worry about that. We have NO recognition of our relationships now and NONE if same-sex marriage doesn't pass either.

I explored the New Jersey report and other reports as well. I read the University of California, The Williams Institute model civil union and marriage legislation which can be found here; <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Pizer-Kuehl-Model-Marriage-Report.pdf>

Another critique of civil unions can be found at <http://www.glad.org/uploads/docs/publications/cu-vs-marriage.pdf> The Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) report reads much like the New Jersey report. According to them, talking about "civil unions" seems to have a debilitating effect on our relationships and our rights. I don't buy it because I can talk about marriage and civil unions just fine without it scarring me too much.

Getting our relationships recognized in Minnesota may mean a little compromise on what it's called. Our relationships are real, exist here and now, and deserve to be recog-

nized by the state this year. As I argued in "What's in a Name" the device used doesn't matter. As I found in this report, there is no substantive difference between these laws. It is time to think clearly about what can pass. I hope for same-sex marriage but I prepare in case this doesn't happen. That isn't settling. That is simply being responsible. □

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SEE ALSO:

"The DFL's Big Gay Farce" from Issue 457, November 29, 2012

"Three of Four Top Elected Minnesota Politicians Comment on the Marriage Debate" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"'Earnest Money:' Repeal DOMA Now" from Issue 458, December 13, 2012

"Why We Can't Wait" an Interview with Sen. John Marty from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Waiting for Superman" from Issue 460, January 10, 2013

"Don't Skip Dessert" an Interview with Rep. Ryan Winkler from Issue 461, January 24, 2013

"What's In A Name?" A Case for Civil Unions from Issue 461, January 24, 2013

"Outreach: Conversation with Rep. Andrea Kieffer (R)" from Issue 462, February 7, 2013

"Carrie Chapman Catt's Winning Plan" from Issue 462, February 7, 2013

"Our Family Albums" from Issue 463, February 21, 2013

"Talking Strategy with Richard Carlborn [of Minnesotans United for All Families]" from Issue 463, February 21, 2013

"Vanguard" from Issue 464, March 7, 2013

"Beating the Clock" from Issue 466, April 4, 2013

"Rocky Mountain High" from Issue 467, April 18, 2013

"The Elephant in the Room" from Issue 467, April 18, 2013

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MARYLAND

Ben Carson Withdraws As Johns Hopkins Commencement Speaker After Gay Marriage Outcry

The *Huffington Post* reports that Dr. Ben Carson, a Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon, said Wednesday evening that he would step down as commencement speaker for the School of Medicine after his incendiary comments opposing gay marriage drew outrage from students and faculty. In a recent appearance on Fox News, Carson compared gay marriage to bestiality and pedophilia, sparking outrage which resulted in a majority of the graduating students signing a petition stating that he was an inappropriate speaker for commencement.

USA

NHL Announces Initiative To Support Gay Athletes

The *New York Times* reports that amid heightened speculation that a male athlete in one of North America's four major professional leagues will soon publicly declare his homosexuality, the National Hockey League and its players announced Thursday what appears to be the most comprehensive measure by a major men's league in support of gay athletes. The NHL plans to train and counsel its teams and players on gay issues, in partnership with the You Can Play Project, a group that fights homophobia in sports. While no gay male player for a major US sports team has come out yet, Patrick Burke, a scout for the Philadelphia Flyers and founder of You Can Play, feels that the very demographics of the NHL makes taking this initiative an important one.

MICHIGAN

Indigo Girls Encourage Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Protest Over Transgender Exclusion

The *Huffington Post* reports that though they'll be on hand to perform, the Indigo Girls are encouraging a protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival for the event's continued exclusion of transgender women. The duo plans to donate the proceeds from their performance to transgender activism. An official statement on the Indigo Girls website states: "We have made it clear that this will be our last time at the Festival until MWMF shows visible and concrete signs of changing their intention."

MISSOURI

Missouri Man Arrested At Hospital For Refusing To Leave Gay Partner

The *Raw Story* reports that a gay man was arrested at a hospital in Missouri this week when he refused to leave the bedside of his partner, and now a restraining order is preventing him from any type of visitation. Roger Gorley, who has a power of attorney to make medical decisions for his partner, refused to leave Research Medical Center in Kansas City when a family member asked him to leave. Gorley was put in handcuffs by hospital security and removed from the building.

CALIFORNIA

San Jose's Gordon Gets Three-Game Ban For Anti-Gay Slur

Reuters reports that San Jose Earthquakes forward Alan Gordon was suspended three games and fined an undisclosed amount by Major League Soccer (MLS) on Tuesday for a homophobic comment he directed at an opponent. The slur, caught on camera

during the Saturday game against the Portland Timbers, was directed toward midfielder Will Johnson. Gordon has since apologized, but MLS Commissioner Don Garber stated: "Major League Soccer stands against discrimination and prejudice of any kind and will not tolerate this type of behavior."

MONTANA

Montana House Backs Repeal Of Law Criminalizing Of Gay Sex

The *Missoulian* reports that the Montana House decisively voted Tuesday to repeal Montana's law making gay sex a crime, putting the bill one step away from the governor's desk. The House voted 64 to 36 to endorse the bill, with 25 Republicans crossing the aisle to join all 39 House Democrats. The bill would remove gay sex from the definition of the crime of "deviate sexual relations", which was a felony that carried a penalty of up to \$50,000 in fines and up to 10 years in prison. Representative Duane Ankney (Republican - Colstrip), who has a lesbian daughter, stated: "To say she is any less of a person or a criminal for her lifestyle ... really upsets me. I consider myself a good Christian ... and I don't think God thinks any less of my daughter than he does of any one of you in here. The law is an embarrassment on the people of Montana. It should go away."

URUGUAY

Uruguay Legalizes Gay Marriage

The *Huffington Post* reports that Uruguayan lawmakers voted Wednesday to legalize gay marriage, making the South American country the third in the Americas to do so. With a backing of 71 of the 92 members of the Chamber of Deputies attending, the passing of the law brought the country in line with twelve other nations around the world that legally recognize same-sex unions. The wording of the legislation creates a single set of rules governing marriage, adoption of children and divorce for all citizens, gay or straight, to ensure that GLBT couples are treated no differently than heterosexual couples in the court of law.

ZEALAND:

New Zealand Gay Marriage: Lawmakers Approve Marriage Equality Bill

The *Huffington Post* reports that hundreds of jubilant gay-rights advocates celebrated at New Zealand's Parliament on Wednesday as the country became the 13th in the world and the first in the Asia-Pacific region to legalize same-sex marriage. With a vote of 77 to 44, lawmakers passed the measure to give equality to all citizens, with lawmakers being encouraged to vote their conscience rather than by party lines. Louisa Wall, sponsor of the bill, stated: "In our society, the meaning of marriage is universal - it's a declaration of love and commitment to a special person. Nothing could make me more proud to be a New Zealander than passing this bill." □



MAZDA CX-9

Photos by Randy Stern

THE IDEA of choice can be a very good thing.

It starts with a basic idea of what you want. Once you decide that you want something that fits your needs and satisfies your wants, then it is time to break down toward the specifics.

It is the way of the consumer, when presented with a plethora of choices. One could start real specific, but what if there was something else that attracts you even if it is different than anything else you are considering? It is always suggested to start from a higher level of the idea before getting truly specific.

This is why shopping for a crossover is not an exact science.

Crossovers and SUVs are broken down in so many different niches that it would be tough to find the right comparison between several models. The break down process starts with asking a few questions. How many passengers do you carry? How much cargo do you intend on hauling? Are you towing anything? What kind of performance do you need? How about fuel economy? What kind of equipment would you prefer to have?

Now that you have exhausted every question possible, what kind of answer did you come up with? In case your answers include V6 power, three rows of seating with the option of folding the rear row down for some considerable cargo space and a sporty driving atmosphere without the snob brand appeal, maybe this one will solve your problem.

The Mazda CX-9 has been around for a few years now. It is one of the last Mazdas co-developed with Ford before they parted ways. It shares the same platform as the Ford Edge, but on a longer wheelbase to accommodate that third row of seating. This year, the CX-9 receives an update that integrates the latest brand design language onto its handsome silhouette: KODO – Soul of Motion.

The KODO face certainly marks an improvement on the CX-9s looks. Though the big crossover was already a compelling package, combining “Zoom-Zoom” with volumes of space, the KODO elements would fool the meekest consumer in thinking it is a brand-new vehicle.

The reality of the CX-9 is the sheer size of it. It is not as large as, say, a Chevrolet Tahoe,

but it is the largest and heaviest Mazda ever made. The largeness of the CX-9 is relative, since Mazda has always been known for sleeker products – the RX-7, the MX-5 Miata, the original Mazda6...you get the picture. There are signs in which Mazda balanced its want of joining in the big family crossover fray with ensuring an air of “Zoom-Zoom” at every surprising turn.

Of course, nothing about “Zoom-Zoom” states where a Mazda cannot have some of the largest doors in its class. Nor does it prevent such luxuries as a self-closing tailgate to be installed on board the CX-9. One wonders whether the twenty-inch wheels of the Grand Touring model is a little bit overkill for the Mazda enthusiast.

Step inside the large doors into a cabin that reminds us of the outgoing Mazda interior design language. Recent turns in the CX-5 and test sittings in new Mazda6 denotes a somewhat restrained interior design compared to what is inside the CX-9 (and the current Mazda3). The instrument bin has the requisite chrome trimmed dials for the speedometer and tachometer separate from

each other. The center stack was massaged to integrate the new TomTom navigation system now found in the CX-5 and Mazda6.

To start up the CX-9 with its keyless system, you do not depress a button on the dashboard. Instead, you turn a knob where the key would normally be slotted. It is not unusual for this action to be present, that is, if you have driven a Cadillac CTS-V through its current and outgoing generation.

The CX-9 provides huge seats for its first row occupants. Perforated leather with some suede-like trim and some dark red piping offer a throne that is both comfortable and supportive. Power adjustments are available for rake, seat-back recline, height and power lumbar support for the driver. Front passengers get power adjustments, except for the lumbar support. Second row seating has the same leather upholstery with rake adjustment, a reclining seat-back and a center armrest with cup holders and a storage bin. The third row is not trimmed in the same leather treatment as the first two rows.

To offset the black interior are some door and center stack trim that provided moment of curiosity. You could ask: "What is that finish?" According to Mazda, it is a Bordeaux metal finish encased in a clear housing in what would normally house either carbon fiber or a finished piece of wood.

Room is decent for average adults for the first two rows. The issue is the position of the second row to ensure third row access from the large doors. Third row space is not meant for even average sized adults. As a saving grace, the second and third rows fold flat for huge and accommodating cargo loads.

It also takes some adjusting to get comfortable behind the wheel, considering the huge space a driver has to ensure control of the CX-9. Front leg space may seem limited for some people, but there is enough room in the wells for necessary footwork. Others may think the front cabin may be a bit too big – all things being relative, of course.

Bose provides ten speakers of Centerpoint Surround Sound power from the new audio/navigation faceplate. The CX-9 offers up HD Radio and SiriusXM satellite programming, along with iPod/iPhone connectivity and Bluetooth streaming. Phone syncing is also done through Bluetooth. In all, the entire infotainment system fills the cabin with wonderful noise.

Under the hood is Mazda's 3.7 litre V6 monster originally co-developed with Ford. The big V6 has 273 horsepower and 270 pound-feet of torque to offer. While this engine worked extremely well in the last generation Mazda6, it works as it does in the CX-9. To gain enthusiast-level satisfaction, you work the throttle a bit more to get all 273 horses to motivate a 4550-pound beast across town. That is where the "Zoom-Zoom" comes in – the V6 does the job to get the CX-9 in the mix whether in-town or out on the highway. The V6 is tuned to tow 3500 pounds of anything behind the rear axle.

Connecting the V6 to the wheels is a six-speed automatic transmission and an all-wheel drive system with Active Torque Split. In reality, the drive system is supposed to sense where grip is lost and send power to balance out traction. It works quite well without complaint and without some button or knob to override the system. Augmenting the all-wheel drive is a set of anti-lock brakes and traction control.

Because of its size – twenty-inch Bridgestone Dueler tires included – the ride is best described as solid. It tries to absorb imperfections in the road, including potholes, with a balanced ride package. The CX-9 will show you some lean on extreme curves and cloverleaf interchanges, but it does a nice job gathering itself up after being twisted around. Handling is fine, but relative considering the purpose of the CX-9 compared to the remainder of the Mazda lineup.

Normally, Mazdas have sharp, quick, and perfectly weighted steering. On the CX-

9, enthusiasts would be a bit disappointed. Then again, this CX-9 is on a relative scale, as the steering action is weighted just right for its purpose. Do not expect a quick reaction from the steering box, though turning is competent and exacting for the size and volume of the vehicle.

One part of the CX-9 that took some consideration was the braking. Granted, there are mid-sized crossovers that have sharper braking. Again, things being relative, the CX-9 does a decent job stopping in normal and panic situations. There is enough rotor space to keep the big crossover in check when the brake pedal is depressed.

There was one huge drawback on the CX-9 – in the fuel tank. The overall consumption in the CX-9 wound up with a rating of 16.3MPG. If you do not mind such consumption in your mid-sized three-row crossover/SUV, the reward is a strong and versatile vehicle that is good for the long run.

Luckily, you can get a fully loaded CX-9 for under \$40,000, as with this Grand Touring tester with the Tech Package. Prices start at around \$30,000 for a Sport with front wheel drive, but climb within a \$10,000 range. While some of its competition keeps on pricing beyond the \$40,000 threshold, the CX-9 retains plenty of value for what you get on board.

Despite its size, some details, and its need to drink volumes of petrol quicker than its competition, the CX-9 should be considered among three-row, mid-sized crossovers. It is garnering all of the accolades reserved for volume sellers, such as the Ford Explorer, but it does so in a rather quiet fashion.

The CX-9 does not need to shout its credentials. It is more than competent and does a lot of things very well. If you want to quantify its "Zoom-Zoom" credentials with what it does for families and other adventurous people, consider it being relative to its mission. It is a mid-sized, three-row crossover after all – and quite a nice one, at that. ■





The Wall

WE MET in the backroom of a Dunn Bros coffee shop, with three tables pushed together in a not-so-square rectangle. Twelve or thirteen people—I lost count—some in suits, some not. Government bigwigs rubbing elbows with ordinary citizens.

And at least three lawyers, including yours truly.

The agenda?

Taking on Big Brother.

Here's the background: Marcy Holmes is the oldest neighborhood in Minnesota, let alone Minneapolis. It's split in two by six lanes of concrete known as "35W." On the east side, there's Dinkytown, the U, and a million stressed-out students. On the west, you've got magnificent older homes, the Stone Arch Bridge, and condos and apartments on just about every corner.

In some ways, the neighborhood is sort of bi-polar—student party animal versus manicured professional and high end retiree—with the interstate serving as a kind of community interruptis (I just invented that phrase, thank you very much) that presents special challenges in terms of keeping continuity between all the parts. Still, we have something—we can look from one side of 35W to the other and wave to fellow Marcy Holmesians (another Elsie word) on a sunny day.

Big Brother wants to change that.

Coming attractions include expanding the number of interstate lanes from three to four. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (aka "MDOT") believes this will result in added traffic and noise and require the erection (oh, how I love that word in any context

other than this) of sound barriers—those forty foot walls of baby crap brown wood and concrete behind which God knows what exists. (Take a drive down 35W south of downtown and you'll get what I mean.)

In other words, MDOT wants to "give" Marcy Holmes its very own Berlin Wall.

How nice.

More than a year ago, MDOT conducted a vote of "affected residents" who live closest to where the Wall would be placed. That vote was skewed—MDOT only polled owners of record (some of whom were landlords who didn't even live in Minnesota). For others, postcards addressed to "Resident" were sent to various apartments. Many of those apartments were occupied by college students, who of course either completely ignored the postcards or used them as backstops for beer pong.

All of this matters because under MDOT's voting rules, a non-vote counts as a "yes" vote. Thus, if only two "no" votes are recorded from 100 postcards—and 98 postcards are never returned—MDOT will deem the neighborhood to have voted *for* the Wall.

How crazy is that? I thought only North Korea conducted votes that way.

Hence why we needed to meet with MDOT.

The Dunn Bros meeting was cordial, but frank. Faced with three Marcy Holmes board-member lawyers and some feisty community activists, MDOT quickly agreed that its original Wall voting process was flawed. We then heard about "decibel ratings" for how noisy traffic can be. My eyes glazed

and hearing hardened after twenty minutes of regulatory nuances and the meaning of "impacted receptors to loss or modification of noise abatement."

Being the impatient sort, I offered a "thirty thousand foot view" of the situation. My take: Marcy Holmes as a neighborhood is already challenged by the existence of 35W. Barely anyone wants more separation, more physical polarization, not to mention safety and graffiti issues. Why spend \$5 million when the neighborhood doesn't want the "Wall?" Couldn't we just call it a day and say that the neighborhood would be better off without those awful noise barriers?

Put the money to some other use—like green spaces. Or teaching inner city boys and girls how to read. We're talking priorities here, people.

Bureaucrats being bureaucrats, the MDOT crowd shook its collective head. There must be another vote on whether to "give" Marcy Holmes the Wall. It's as if that \$5 million is burning a hole in MDOT's wallet.

The lesson here: we need to protect our neighborhoods. For those of us who seek to put down roots—who want to call Minneapolis *home*—we must draw lines in the sand against the myriad of things that work to undermine the collective sense of "neighborhood."

It takes vigilance and vision. It also takes time, something that many of us don't have.

Yet, enough is enough, making me want to revert to student-speak.

Don't Wall me, Bro! Don't Wall me! □

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OBITUARY

PETER LASHA was a native of Buffalo New York and received a Fulbright scholarship to study in Sri Lanka for 4 years, which profoundly influenced his perspective on life. Peter lived in LA California for several years where he recruited for the marines. For a short time he worked in construction in Wisconsin. In 1973 he moved to the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis and was a caregiver for his aunt, who suffered from dementia. Peter stayed on at Prospect Park until his death on December 13th of Uremia.

Peter served on the board of directors of the Prospect Park / East River Road Improvement Association and amassed a large history on Prospect Park. He was very active within his GLBT leather community as well as working at Gaze Magazine assisting in editing and proofing body copy. He had a large library of books on a variety of topics.

Peter felt that greed was destroying American culture and worked at helping people rather than amassing wealth. He believed in the Goddess Shiva, and expressed himself by way of Religious tattoos on his earthly body. His friends feel that Peter has found his delightful Goddess and that at this very moment they are sipping tea and enjoying crumpets while they shake their heads at all those greedy Americans who are twittering their life away. For years Peter had a number of Shih Tzu dogs, the matriarch of the line was Chairman Mao. His neighbors were like family; he enjoyed classical music and was an avid Greenbay Packer Fan. His friends sorely miss him.



DATELAND | Jennifer Parelo

Que Sera Sera

I'M WRITING this column on Doris Day's 89th birthday. It also happens to be my last day at a company I've worked at for the past 17 years. It's fitting that these events coincide since Doris Day was my career role model from an early age.

I first saw "Pillow Talk" when I was around 16 years old. It was a transformative experience. No, not because Doris portrayed a character who was still a virgin at 35 years old. Or that she played Rock Hudson's love interest, rather than Tony Randall.

What impressed me was that she was a single, middle-aged woman (in the early 1980's, 35 was middle-aged), with fabulous clothes, an incredible apartment, and a great job in the arts (interior decorator). And, of course, the icing on the cake was that her maid was the magnificent Thelma Ritter, who showed up daily (and drunk) to tidy the already immaculate flat.

In my mom's generation, if you went to college, you had only two career options: nurse or teacher. If you didn't go to college, you joined the steno pool. The other options were housewife or whore. In my generation, career options for women were still fairly limited. I was planning on going the whore route, but my parents insisted on college. So I mindlessly followed orders and planned to get a nursing degree, as my mother did.

But then I saw Pillow Talk! And, for the first time, I knew I had options. Let's start with the fact that Doris wore a matching leopard-print hat and muff! I didn't realize this was an acceptable fashion choice for anyone other than the Duchess of Windsor or Nathan Lane. She was sassy, independent, and chose to remain a spinster rather than marry someone she didn't love.

Most importantly she worked in an artistic career that she was passionate about. And that's exactly what I wanted to do.

As a compromise between my parents' demand that I be pragmatic, and my desire to be a sunny cross between Doris Day and Dorothy Parker, I became a journalist. When I had enough of that, I joined a publishing company, where I've stayed for almost two decades. I started as an editor, and then moved to marketing, and have spent the past 10 years taking advantage of the company's executive misdirection to create my own opportunities and lead much of the company's innovation.

Now, after a fine bit of bragging like that, I'm sure you expect me to announce that the ungrateful bastards fired me. But, come on! Would anyone dare sack Doris Day?

After an upper management shakeup transformed the executive suite into a sexist enclave of former frat boys who pathetically talked openly about their chances of banging certain young, buxom editors—as if any smart, large-breasted woman would ever let their sad penises anywhere near them—I took a page from D. Day's book. When she discovered that Rock Hudson was a cad, she maintained a professional façade, but worked behind the scenes to damage his integrity while maintaining her own. And, I did the same. I quietly found an awesome new job, and quit just when my bosses needed me most.

From Doris I learned that you have absolute power in making life choices, and to always choose passion, creative expression and intellectual challenge over complacency, subservience and submission. And to never be scared of wearing pillbox hats and capes to the office.

She may have become famous for singing "Que Sera Sera," that exquisite ode to passivity and fate, but to me her true legacy rests in her "Pillow Talk" role of Jan Morrow—a career gal fully in charge of her professional and personal lives.

Happy birthday, Doris. And thanks. □

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Wild Sex Worries and Lesbian/Straight Friends With Benefits

Dear Ms. Behavior:

My sweet younger boyfriend Jake has invited me to his childhood home in another state for a week-long vacation, and to meet his family. He's very excited about my visit, and insists that we stay for two of the nights at his parent's house. We would check into a hotel for the rest of the time. I'm afraid that staying with his parents could be weird because he says they still occasionally ask him if he's sure he's gay. Also, we're in a bit of a long-distance relationship and I want to be able to have lots of uninhibited sex. What do you think? I'm crazy about Jake and hope to be with him forever. He thinks my concern about wild sex is silly, since we have our whole lives ahead of us.

DEAR J.

If Jake is comfortable with his queerness at his parents' house, you'll have to trust that it will be okay. Bring presents and be charming. More importantly, if it's erotic excitement you want, hotels are not the only answer. Do not miss this opportunity to sodomize your boyfriend in his childhood bed. Make the hotel reservation for the earlier part of the week, so that you can scream and yell (and hold hands) as much as you want. Then, let Jake show you around his old neighborhood and introduce you to his parents and his siblings. On a quiet afternoon, when everyone is home, ask Jake to give you a tour of his bedroom, showing you his posters, his trophies, his old report cards, and his ancient bong. Touch and admire all of his boyhood possessions. If he has an old high school soccer uniform, ask him to try it on for you, even if he's outgrown it. Let him read to you from his favorite

childhood books. Then, wrestle him onto his narrow twin bed and sodomize him with your hand clasped over his mouth while his mother makes tea and crumpets downstairs and his father reads the paper. He'll never fall out of love with you.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

During the eight years of a committed lesbian relationship, I socialized mostly with men, as I didn't trust myself to get too close to women. (I never cheated; I avoided temptation like the plague). Now I am single and enjoy without guilt the lovely company of women. The problem is that I've become sexually attracted to these straight friends. Add to it the hormones of a 30-something and a year without sex, and I come precipitously close to losing my mind.

I'd love to add a physical component to our enjoyment of each other, but I'm not looking for a girlfriend. I don't want to trade my friendships for one passionate evening, perhaps followed by the other party considering herself a girlfriend, having to break up with her, then having to wait the requisite time to become friends again, if even allowed. (This is on the presumption that they would conveniently become bi-curious in my presence).

How can I find out if my straight girlfriends might be amenable to a passionate expression of my affection for them without causing offense or coming off as too presumptuous? (Yes, I have a vibrator, but it knows nothing of caresses, affection, or fondness). Should I just keep life simple (and dull!), and stick to male friends and dead-end flirtations?

-PERPETUALLY FRUSTRATED

Dear Perpetually Frustrated:

You haven't mentioned how many of your straight friends you'd like to fondle, although your use of the plural pronoun implies more than one. So, is it two out of six? Three out of four? Choose carefully; having your way with all your friends may create discord in your social circle, and may also prompt otherwise courteous people to call you names, like "opportunistic slut," even if only out of jealousy or insecurity.

Straight women do sometimes fall for lesbians, even when lesbians go to great lengths to clarify their non-romantic intentions. The last person with whom a straight woman has been intimate is most likely a straight man. This is hardly fair competition for lesbians, who are far more practiced in both emotional expression and cunnilingus. Your "passionate expression of affection" may easily be confused with love; plus, lesbians exude pheromones that reduce inhibitions in heterosexual women. So grateful straight women often become lesbian cling-ons, refusing to accept that along with the social and economic advantages of heterosexuality comes mediocre sex.

Instead of risking your straight-girl friendships, why not find a fun sex-positive lesbian (or several) with whom to enjoy erotic pleasure? Despite the unfortunate rumor about lesbians and their U-hauls, Ms. Behavior gets truckloads of letters from dykes who long for passionate sex without commitment who never meet like-minded women.

Should Ms. Behavior start a fuck-buddy dating service for lesbians? ☐

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Aunt Barbara

MOST OF you reading this are members of the GLBT community. It isn't easy for us, is it? Some of us lose family and friends when we tell them who we are and whom we love, and through these losses we gain insight into the values to which our families and friends cling. We're made aware of bigotry, we see ignorance, and perceive irrationality.

What comes with the pain of such abandonment is an outlook commonly bleak and jaded. Some of us will use the experience to hone our wit. Others will cling to material things to forget their pain. A few will let their lives hinge on—and dissipate under—the hurtful opinions of the ones they love. Insecurity becomes an issue, and trust, more so. Tear-downs and gossip are an unsurprising result.

Most of us, though, will force our way through as we would through any trial. We may become a little more hesitant with people new to our lives, but we'll pursue who we want to be: ourselves.

What goes so unappreciated during these trials is simple. As our pain from rejection, abuse, and apathy subsides, we are presented a priceless opportunity from which too many people walk away. We have the opportunity in the face of this adversity to create our own families.

Through our proverbial ashes rise the lives we build for ourselves—lives unbur-

dened by the opinions of those who refuse to understand.

The families we build for ourselves no doubt include the people who knew us before we came out, and love us no differently when we do. The rest of our new families we build with new friends.

What once I considered my family was large. We convened at my grandmother's house every Sunday after church for fried chicken and sweet tea (yes, I'm from the South). We held sacred our reunions, Thanksgivings, Christmases, and Easters.

But as my family aged, it faded. Cousins and siblings grew up and forgot our holidays. After my grandfather and grandmother died, so too left their extended families, and aunts and uncles vanished.

Of my family, which once numbered a dozen or more on a regular Sunday afternoon, there lives now only one person I consider part of my family today. She is the person I love most in the world. She was my mother when mine died, and she remains so more than ever before.

"You didn't have to come out to me," she once joked. "When you were 18 months old you came to my country house and marveled at my antiques. I knew right away you were gay."

When I was a kid she let me plunder her closet and play in her clothes. She refused

to call me "Scooter" (my nickname) in favor of "Justin," to lend me the air of maturity I so desperately desired. She invited me to escape social suffocation in North Carolina to spend my every teenage summer with her in Fort Lauderdale. And she's inspired me to pursue my greatest passion, my writing.

The things she's led me to try, to achieve, to aspire to, are far beyond any words I can publish in a magazine, but she is my family not for anything aforementioned, and she isn't my family because she merely was my mother's sister.

She is my family because she is the sum of the Brilliant Intangible—an invisible, undefinable thing we each hold in our hearts.

To me, she's always been Aunt Barbara, and though this is the title and name I've used always, her most accurate description is "Mom."

Everyone has their own Aunt Barbara. She may be a "he," she may be a family member or a friend, she may be a social worker, a role model, or an idea. An Aunt Barbara is anything that provides for you a reason for being who you are, and aspiring to who you want to be.

So for the Aunt Barbaras of the world, and most especially for my own, words on a page aren't enough, but I'll give it a try...

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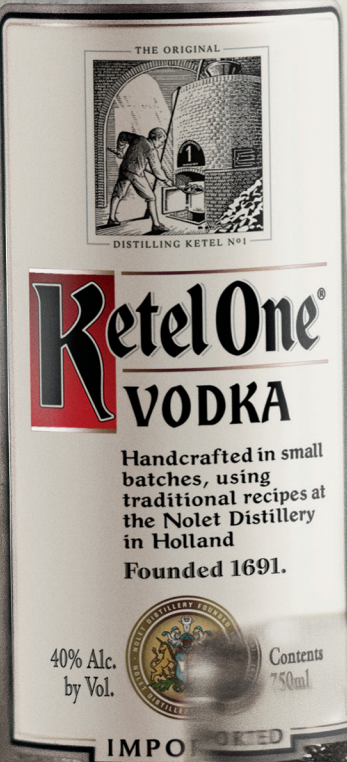
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